Reeves Administration announces temporary Medicaid changes in response to coronavirus outbreak

Telehealth Services Extended, 1135 Waiver Requested

In response to the coronavirus outbreak, the Mississippi Division of Medicaid (DOM) will expand its coverage of telehealth services throughout the state in alignment with Governor Tate Reeves' recommendations on leveraging telemedicine to care for patients while limiting unnecessary travel, clinic visits and possible exposure.

Effective immediately through May 31, 2020, DOM's Emergency Telehealth Policy will allow additional use of telehealth services to combat the spread of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Details of enhanced services include the following:

- A beneficiary may access telehealth services from his or her home.
- A beneficiary may use his or her personal cellular device, computer, tablet, or other web camera-enabled device to seek and receive medical care with a qualified distant-site provider.
- The requirement for a telepresenter to be present with the beneficiary is waived when the beneficiary receives telehealth services in the home.
- Any provider that is eligible to bill DOM for services is now allowed to serve as a distant site provider, Rural Health Clinics (RHCs) and Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs).

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- Any limitation on the use of audio-only telephonic consultations is waived.

These enhanced telehealth options will be available in fee-for-service Medicaid, Medicaid managed care, and the Children's Health Insurance Program.

"We're not taking any chances. We are taking every step necessary to slow the spread of COVID-19 and ensure public health throughout Mississippi. This is about protecting our doctors, our nurses, our healthcare workers, and all Mississippians. Increasing telehealth services across Mississippi limits the potential for exposure and helps combat the spread throughout our communities," said Governor Tate Reeves.

The agency also is seeking federal approval for an 1135 Medicaid waiver to give the program a wider range of flexibilities during the emergency. If approved, the 1135 waiver would give DOM the discretion, when necessary and proper, to relax prior authorization requirements, eliminate Preadmission Screening and Annual Resident Review (PASRR) reviews at nursing homes, suspend revalidations for current providers, and expedite new provider enrollment.

"An unprecedented virus requires unprecedented response," said Medicaid Director Drew Snyder. "The aggressive steps announced today will help ensure Medicaid beneficiaries continue to have critical access to the care they need while supporting the broader effort to combat COVID-19."

Other requested Section 1135 flexibilities include allowing care to be provided in alternative settings, revising rules for critical access hospitals, and relaxing telehealth security requirements so that providers can use readily available platforms like Facetime and Skype to facilitate telehealth visits with patients.

Additional information on policies, coding, and reimbursement related to the COVID-19 outbreak will continue to be added to a resource page on the agency's website at https://medicaid.ms.gov/coronavirus-updates/.

Providers are asked to direct their questions to 800-884-3222.

DOM remains committed to ensuring that Medicaid beneficiaries receive access to care, that Medicaid providers are reimbursed for necessary services, and that taxpayer dollars continue to be spent responsibly.

Published March 19, 2020/Updated April, 10, 2020

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March 19, 2020
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