Whitmer Administration Expands Telemedicine, Urges President Trump to Permit ACA Special Enrollment Period During COVID-19

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LANSING, Mich. -- Today, Governor Gretchen Whitmer announced that her administration will expand access to telemedicine for Michiganders by immediately allowing Medicaid beneficiaries to receive services in their home while the state combats the spread of Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). In addition, insurance plans like Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, Blue Care Network of Michigan, Priority Health, Meridian, CVS Health, McLaren, and Health Alliance Plan also announced that they will cover and encourage the use of virtual care and telemedicine, as well as waive cost-sharing for COVID-19 testing.

Governor Whitmer and Michigan Department of Insurance and Financial Services (DIFS) Director Anita Fox also called on the Trump administration to allow for a special enrollment period under the Affordable Care Act (**www.healthcare.gov**) to allow more Americans, including Michiganders, to sign up for coverage and help mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

“During this crisis, we must do everything we can to ensure access to quality, affordable health care,” said **Governor Whitmer.** “That’s why we’re calling on the president to allow for a special enrollment period, and why we’re taking action today in Michigan to expand opportunities for safe, quality care through telemedicine. We will continue to work with our partners across both state and federal government, as well as those in the private sector, to ensure Michiganders everywhere can access the care they need.”

“When we expand access through telemedicine, we can help reduce the number of Michiganders who need to visit their health care provider in person, which will help slow the spread of disease and ensure our health facilities have adequate staff and resources to care for those who are sick,” said Michigan Department of Health and Human services (MDHHS) **Director Robert Gordon.** “And when we expand coverage through a special enrollment period, we can ensure access to quality, affordable care to more Michiganders. This is about keeping the people of Michigan safe and combatting the spread of COVID-19.”

After Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria devastated communities across the Southern United States, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services announced a special enrollment period for those impacted by the hurricanes. Special enrollment periods have also been used to respond to more personal situations such as house fires or domestic violence.

“The president should do what’s best for Americans and allow for a special enrollment period while we combat the spread of COVID-19,” said DIFS **Director Anita Fox**. “Michiganders need leaders who will do everything they can to ensure quality, affordable care during times like this. It’s the smart thing to do, and it’s the right thing to do.”

Michigan currently has two presumptive positive cases of COVID-19. Patients with confirmed infection have reportedly had mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

The best prevention for viruses, such as influenza, the common cold or COVID-19 is to:

- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for 20 seconds. If not available, use hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or upper sleeve when coughing or sneezing.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- If you are sick, stay home, and avoid contact with others.

Information around this outbreak is changing rapidly. The latest information is available at **Michigan.gov/Coronavirus** and **CDC.gov/Coronavirus**.

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