

All MCOs: Pharmacy Benefit Updates Related to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Outbreak

Background:

This notice provides pharmacy benefit updates related to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

Key Details:

Early Refills and 90-day Supplies

On March 19 the Texas State Board of Pharmacy authorized pharmacists in Texas to dispense up to a 30-day supply of medication (other than a schedule II-controlled substance) for patients in Texas in response to the state of disaster declaration for COVID-19.

Action:

MCOs must ensure their pharmacy benefit manager's claims processing systems can accommodate early refills. Additionally, the MCO should be prepared to accept 90-day supplies of medication. System changes should be ready or implement a manual process **by Friday, March 20**. MCOs that are unable to complete system changes by this date may implement a manual process in the interim.

In accordance with UMCC 8.1.21.12, MCOs are required to have a process to ensure Medicaid and CHIP members receive free outpatient pharmaceutical deliveries from community retail pharmacies in their service areas. The MCO cannot charge a member any fees for choosing to use a mail-order pharmacy, including postage or handling for standard or expedited deliveries.

Mail-order delivery is not an appropriate substitute for delivery from a qualified community retail pharmacy unless requested by the member. MCOs must not limit 90-day supplies to mail-order pharmacies only. A 90-day supply must be available through all contracted pharmacies.

The outbreak may impact the medical product supply chain in the U.S., including potential drug shortages. The Vendor Drug Program (VDP) is monitoring the U.S. Food & Drug Administration website of new drug shortages related to the outbreak. VDP encourages providers to complete the Drug Shortage Notification ([HHS Form 1315](#)) to inform HHSC of potential shortages impacting prescribing choice or pharmacy claim processing. This process ensures notification of alternatives to the shorted drug, timeline of the shortage, and the drug's availability for use.

On March 12, NPR reported how disruptions in China are affecting some drug makers' ability to make key ingredients: "...the serious supply disruptions many have feared haven't come to pass. Many facilities are back online after production interruptions related to the coronavirus response." Facilities mentioned there are concerns of a second wave of setbacks that could lead to possible drug shortages

<https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2020/03/12/814623335/how-coronavirus-is-affecting-the-u-s-pharmaceutical-supply>

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