



April 14, 2023

COVID-19 Emergency Changes Ending

Dear Provider:

During COVID-19 response efforts, emergency changes became critical to ensure access to care for our members. Emergency changes included voluntary operational changes and changes based on emergency rules and directives issued by federal regulatory agencies. The Louisiana Public Health Emergency (PHE) was lifted in March 2022 and all COVID-19 related Louisiana state mandates have expired.

Please read below for important information on the ending of the federal COVID-19 PHE and National Emergency (NE). Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana, including HMO Louisiana, Inc., will take the following actions in response to the COVID-19 PHE that will end on May 11, 2023. The NE ended on April 10, 2023. The changes related to the PHE will go into effect for dates of services beginning May 12, 2023. The changes related to the NE were effective April 11, 2023, or unless stated otherwise:

COVID-19 Testing

When the PHE ends on May 11, 2023, Blue Cross will no longer waive member cost share (copayment, deductible or coinsurance) and prior authorization requirements for all types of COVID-19 tests. This also applies to associated medically necessary services such as office visits, lab work, chest x-rays or CT scans in addition to physician and ancillary services, emergency department visits, urgent care visits and telehealth visits (in place of office visits).

We will no longer cover or reimburse for over-the-counter COVID-19 test purchases. This is the normal Blue Cross process for over-the-counter tests and products. COVID-19 tests will no longer be available for purchase through Express Scripts' mail order (direct-to-consumer) program.

Use iLinkBlue (www.bcbsla.com/ilinkblue) to verify member benefits, eligibility and cost share information.

Vaccines and Antiviral Drugs

When the PHE ends on May 11, 2023, we will continue to waive cost share and any applicable prior authorization for COVID-19 vaccines and vaccine administration fees when administered by **network providers** for those plans subject to covering preventive and wellness services at \$0 under the Affordable Care Act. This includes non-grandfathered plans. Members in those plans may have additional out-of-pocket costs when receiving vaccines from out-of-network providers.

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Note that the federal government has been supplying COVID-19 vaccines at no cost for the vaccine itself, but the federal supplies of the vaccines are expected to run out in 2023. When federally supplied vaccines are no longer available, applicable cost share for the vaccine as described above will apply.

Use iLinkBlue (www.bcbsla.com/ilinkblue) to verify member benefits, eligibility and cost share information.

COVID-19 Oral Antiviral Medications

The end of the PHE and NE does not change our current coverage of antiviral medications used to treat COVID-19. Today, members pay the applicable dispense fee and taxes. When the federal supply for the medication itself ends, members will be responsible for applicable Tier 2 cost share based on their plans.

Use iLinkBlue (www.bcbsla.com/ilinkblue) to verify member benefits, eligibility and cost share information.

Telehealth

Beginning January 1, 2023, Blue Cross made permanent changes to its telehealth policies to include certain services within the following areas based on health plan and applicable cost share.

- Office & Outpatient Visits
- Wellness & Preventive Visits
- Behavioral Health
- Applied Behavioral Analysis
- Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy & Speech Therapy
- Preventive Medicine Counseling
- Transitional Care Management
- Diabetes Management
- Dietary & Nutritional Therapy
- Obesity Counseling
- Alcohol & Substance Abuse Screening
- Smoking Cessation & Tobacco Counseling
- Sexually Transmitted Infections & High-intensity Behavioral Counseling

Blue Cross telehealth policies are outlined in Section 5.37 of the *Professional Provider Office Manual*. That manual is available online at www.bcbsla.com/providers >Resources >Manuals. Use iLinkBlue (www.bcbsla.com/ilinkblue) to verify member benefits, eligibility and cost share information.

Contact Us

If you have questions about the COVID-19 changes, you may send an email to our Provider Relations Department at provider.relations@bcbsla.com. Please put "COVID-19" in the subject line.

Thank you for working with us to serve our members, especially during the COVID-19 crisis. We value you as a key part of our provider networks and the services you bring to our members—your patients.

Sincerely,

Provider Operations
Health Services Division

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