



Availability Standards for Blue Cross Providers

Blue Cross is committed to providing access to high quality healthcare for all members, promoting healthier lifestyles and ensuring member satisfaction with the delivery of care. To support these commitments, network providers are responsible for meeting the following availability standards:

Provider Availability Standards	
Service Type	Standard
Primary Care	
Routine	15-days
Urgent	7-days
Mental Health/Substance Use Disorder (MHSUD)	
Non-life-threatening Emergency	6-hours
Urgent	48-hours
Initial Visit Routine	10-business days
Follow-up Routine	30-days
High-impact Specialty Providers	
Routine	30-days
Urgent	15-days
High-volume Specialty Providers	
Routine	30-days
Urgent	15-days
Facilities	
Hospital/Emergency Room	Immediately
Non-hospital Inpatient Facility	30-hours
Urgent Care Center	30-hours
Outpatient Facility	15-days

Additional Availability Standards

- Routine care includes problems that could develop if untreated but do not substantially restrict a member's normal activity.
- Network physicians are responsible for assuring access to services 24 hours a day, 365 days a year other than in an emergency room for non-emergent conditions. This includes arrangements to assure patient awareness and access after hours to another participating physician.
- All network providers must offer services during normal working hours, typically between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m.
- Average office waiting times should be no more than 30 minutes for patients who arrive on time for a scheduled appointment.
- The physician's office should return a patient's call or portal message within four to six hours for an urgent/acute medical question and within 24 hours for a non-urgent issue.

Acute Care Hospital Availability Standards

- Acute care hospitals are responsible for ensuring access to services 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.
- All contracted hospitals must maintain emergency or urgent care services on a 24-hour basis and must offer outpatient services during regular business hours, if applicable.

For more on the Blue Cross Availability Standards Policy, see Section 2: Network Participation in the *Professional Provider Office Manual*. Find this manual at www.bcbsla.com/providers >Resources >Manuals.

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