

## **COVID-19 update: Suspension of select prior authorization rules and announces significant policy adjustments in response to unprecedented demands on health care providers (updated May 30, 2020)**

Amerigroup, District of Columbia, Inc. recognizes the intense demands facing doctors, hospitals and all health care providers in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. Today, unless otherwise required under state and federal mandates, as detailed below, Amerigroup DC health plans is making adjustments to assist providers in caring for members. These adjustments apply to enrollees of all lines of business, including self-insured plan enrollees.

### **Inpatient and respiratory care**

PA requirements are suspended for patient transfers through May 30, 2020.

- PA will be waived for patient transfers from acute inpatient (IP) hospitals to: skilled nursing facilities, rehabilitation hospitals, long-term acute care hospitals, behavioral health residential/intensive outpatient/partial hospitalization programs, and home health, in addition to ground transport in support of those transfers. Although PA is not required, Amerigroup DC requests voluntary notification via the usual channels to aid in our enrollees' care coordination and management.
- Extending the length of time a prior authorization on or before May 30, 2020 is in effect for elective inpatient and outpatient procedures to 180 days. This will help prevent the need for additional outreach to Amerigroup DC to adjust the date of service covered by the authorization.
- The 21-day inpatient requirement before transferring a patient to a long-term acute care hospital is suspended.
- Concurrent review for discharge planning will continue unless required to change by federal or state directive.
- **PA requirements are suspended for COVID-19 Durable Medical Equipment**, including oxygen supplies, respiratory devices, noninvasive ventilators, and multi-function ventilators for patients who need these devices for any medical reason as determined by a provider, along with the requirement for authorization to exceed quantity limits on gloves and masks. **Update:** Prior authorization for continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) is suspended for COVID-19 related diagnoses only; all other CPAP uses follow the existing prior authorization process.
- Respiratory services for acute treatment of COVID-19 will be covered. PA requirements are suspended where previously required.

### **COVID-19 testing**

Laboratory tests for COVID-19 at both in-network and out-of-network laboratories will be covered.

### **Claims audits, retrospective review, peer-to-peer review and policy changes**

Amerigroup DC will adjust the way claims are handled and monitored to ease administrative demands on providers:

- Hospital claims audits requiring additional clinical documentation will be limited through June 24, 2020, though Amerigroup DC reserves the right to conduct retrospective reviews on these findings with expanded lookback recovery periods for all lines of business. To assist providers, Amerigroup DC offers electronic submission of clinical documents through the provider portal.
- Retrospective utilization management review will also be suspended through June 24, 2020, and Amerigroup DC reserves the right to conduct retrospective utilization management review of these claims when this period ends and adjust claims as required.
- Suspend peer-to-peer reviews through June 24, 2020, except where required pre-denial per operational workflow or where required by the state during this time period for all lines of business.
- Our Special Investigation programs targeting provider fraud will continue, as well as other program integrity functions that help ensure payment accuracy.
- New payment and utilization management policies and policy updates will be minimized, unless helpful in the management of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Otherwise, Amerigroup DC will continue to administer claims adjudication and payment in line with our benefit plans and state and federal regulations, including claims denials where applicable. Our timely filing requirements remain in place, but Amerigroup DC is aware of limitations and heightened demands that may hinder prompt claims submission.

### **Provider credentialing**

Through June 24, 2020, Amerigroup DC credentials licensed/state certified independent health care practitioners when an independent relationship exists between Amerigroup DC and the practitioner, and such individual practitioner is listed individually in the network directory.

COVID-19 is causing some disruption to the Amerigroup DC credentialing processes. Specifically, we are experiencing limited disruptions with entities that provide primary source verifications; some organizations have suspended processes for issuing or maintaining credentials:

- Certifying or professional boards — testing has been suspended as well as the delay in issuing certifications and/or renewals
- Training institutions — some have closed so professional education/training cannot be verified
- Licensing boards — license renewals may be delayed and current expiration dates may have to be extended

In light of these disruptions, Amerigroup DC continues to make our best effort to expedite the credentialing of practitioners who meet all Amerigroup DC credentialing criteria.

If a practitioner fails to meet our minimum criteria because of sanctions, disciplinary action etc., the normal process of sending these applications to committee for review will be followed therefore, the timeline may be greater.

**Amerigroup DC does not credential:**

- Locum tenens (Practitioners filling gaps due to temporary health care shortage such as those previously retired and returning to practice)
- Practitioners who are not part of our network and are providing care to our members as part of a federal, state or local government emergency response team
- Practitioners who practice exclusively in an inpatient or group practice setting and provide care for our members only because members are directed to the hospital or another inpatient setting or group practice
- Practitioners who practice exclusively in free-standing facilities and provide care for our members only because members are directed to the facility

**Additional prior authorization changes**

Amerigroup DC is committed to working with and supporting providers. As of March 16, 2020, Amerigroup DC is removing PA requirements for skilled nursing facilities (SNF) for the next 90 days to assist hospitals in managing possible capacity issues. SNF Providers should continue admission notification to Amerigroup DC in an effort to verify eligibility and benefits for all members prior to rendering services and to assist with ensuring timely payments.

Amerigroup DC is also extending the length of time a PA is in effect for elective inpatient and outpatient procedures to 90 days. This will help prevent the need for additional outreach to Amerigroup DC to adjust the date of service covered by the authorization.

Providers should check the [Provider Website – COVID-19 News and Resources](#) page for any future Amerigroup DC administrative changes or policy adjustments we may make in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the [Government of the District of Columbia](#) website for District related COVID-19 updates.

**Amerigroup DC Provider website:** <https://providers.amerigroup.com/pages/dc.aspx>

**District of Columbia DC COVID-19 Updates website:** <https://coronavirus.dc.gov>