



Gavin Newsom, Governor
State of California
Health and Human Services Agency
DEPARTMENT OF MANAGED HEALTH CARE
980 9th Street, Suite 500
Sacramento, CA 95814
Phone: 916-324-8176 | Fax: 916-255-5241
www.HealthHelp.ca.gov

ALL PLAN LETTER

DATE: March 12, 2020
TO: All Health Care Service Plans
FROM: Sarah Ream, Acting General Counsel
SUBJECT: APL 20-007 (OPL) "Social Distancing" Measures in Response to COVID-19

COVID-19 has been declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) to be a pandemic, and the Governor has proclaimed a state of emergency. To help slow the spread of the disease, health organizations, including WHO, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the California Department Public Health, recommend "social distancing" when possible. Health plans can assist with medically appropriate social distancing in the delivery of health care services.

The DMHC encourages health plans to take the actions described below to facilitate the delivery of health care services in a manner that decreases the need for in-person visits, for the duration of the state of emergency proclaimed by the Governor on March 4, 2020.

A. Expand health care delivery via telehealth

1. If the health plan has pre-authorization or pre-certification requirements that contracted providers must meet before the plan will cover care delivered via telehealth, as defined in Business and Professions Code section 2290.5, the plan should either expedite the plan's review process or relax those pre-authorization/pre-certification requirements to allow the plan to more quickly approve providers to offer services via telehealth.
2. Plans should waive applicable cost-sharing for care delivered via telehealth, notwithstanding that a cost-share might apply if the provider delivered the care in-person.

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B. Decrease the need for in-person pharmacy visits¹

1. Plans should allow enrollees to receive at least a 90-day supply of maintenance drugs, as defined in California Code of Regulations section 1300.67.24(d)(3)(D), unless the enrollee's provider has indicated a shorter supply of a drug is appropriate for the enrollee.
2. Plans should suspend prescription drug refill limitations where the enrollee's provider has indicated a refill is appropriate for the enrollee.
3. Plans should waive delivery charges for home delivery of prescription medications.

If you have questions regarding this All Plan Letter, please contact your plan's assigned reviewer in the DMHC's Office of Plan Licensing.

¹ These provisions apply to health plans that provide coverage for outpatient prescription drug benefits.