



# **DDD SHOUT**

## **PROVIDER NEWSLETTER**

Volume XXI - January 2021

### **COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Update**

The Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) is prioritizing the distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine in Arizona [in three phases](#). Most Arizona counties are currently in Phase 1A, which includes healthcare personnel, healthcare support occupations including HCBS direct care workers and long-term care facility residents (and staff at these facilities); while some counties have moved into Phase 1B, which expands vaccination to additional groups, including protective services occupations.

Distribution of the vaccine will be conducted at the county level. Counties and tribal partners may elect to prioritize populations within each phase of the vaccine roll out, based on considerations specific to their jurisdiction. Please see your county's public health website for distribution information. Points of Dispensing (POD) sites will be established in each county. Please refer to the [Arizona Department of Health Services COVID-19 vaccine web page](#) for county contacts and additional information about the vaccine and distribution plan. Additional links for county and clinic pre-registration and pre-screening for vaccine availability can be found at <http://azhealth.gov/findvaccine>.

Qualified Vendors and Providers may get questions from members or their families regarding the COVID-19 vaccine. The Division has added a link to a [COVID-19 Vaccine Information in Plain Language](#) document created by the Self Advocacy Resource and Technical Assistance Center (SARTAC) on its [Actions Related to COVID-19 web page](#). The Division is still awaiting confirmation on whether additional DDD members (not living in Long-Term Care Facilities) will be included among Phase 1C. The Division will communicate additional information from ADHS as it becomes available.

### **Standard Rate Book**

On December 24, 2020, the Division posted an updated [Provider Rate Book](#) and [Rate Book Lookup File](#) on the DDD website with an effective date of January 1, 2021. This new version includes the following:

- Updated adopted rates effective January 1, 2021
- Updated temporary rates for Flagstaff effective January 1, 2021

### **Temporary Incentive Rate Book and Lump Sum Payments**

DDD continues to address the challenges presented by the COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE) and its impact on DDD members, vendors and providers. [FAQs](#) on DDD website are continually updated as Vendors provide additional feedback and questions. DDD appreciates the extraordinary efforts of the DDD Provider Network over the past 10 months to ensure continued service delivery to DDD members in extremely challenging circumstances. This effort has required additional expenses – including Personal Protective

Equipment (PPE), Sanitation Supplies, and Overtime Costs. Certain services like Day Treatment Programs, Employment and Transportation services had to temporarily close, and upon reopening, had fewer individuals participating in their programs. Although those service providers were delivering services to fewer members, they still paid fixed costs like rent, utilities, and vehicle payments. So when factoring in all of the financial challenges, DDD implemented a funding strategy that evolved over the course of the past few months and will continue to evolve into 2021.

On April 22, 2020, DDD published a temporary incentive rate book intended to assist Qualified Vendors in retaining and recruiting direct care staff during the COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE). This rate book was in effect for services provided through August 31, 2020. As the COVID-19 PHE has continued to impact Arizona and to ensure the safety and care of DDD members and Direct Care Workers and the continued viability of DDD Qualified Vendors, DDD released a new [temporary incentive rate book](#) on Friday, January 8, 2021, that will be effective for services provided from January 1, 2021, through March 31, 2021.

As was the case with the previous temporary incentive rate book, Qualified Vendors must agree to distribute a percentage of the incentive adjustment amount to the direct care staff in the form of a temporary increase in salary, wages, stipends, and other employee related expenses (ERE) in order to receive the incentive rates. In this temporary incentive rate book, Qualified Vendors are required to distribute 70% of the incentive rate to their staff instead of 80% as required in the temporary rate book in April 2020. The [Temporary Incentive Rate Book](#) and the accompanying [Temporary Incentive Rate Book Lookup File](#) are available on the Division's website. For the services that do not have a temporary incentive rate increase, the Division is continuing to issue lump sum incentive payments in response to survey information collected.

## **Vendor Surveys for Specific Services**

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact Arizona including DDD members, vendors and providers. Therefore, DDD is asking for continued assistance in providing feedback related to the impact on specific DDD services via surveys. DDD requests Qualified Vendors who provide the following services complete the associated survey no later than close of business **Friday, February 5, 2021**. Links to each survey can be found below:

### **Day Treatment, Employment and Transportation Services**

- [Preview the survey questions](#)
- [Complete the survey](#)

### **Developmental Home Services**

- [Preview the survey questions](#)
- [Complete the survey](#)

### **Group Home Services**

- [Preview the survey questions](#)
- [Complete the survey](#)

### **In-Home Services (Attendant Care, Habilitation - Hourly, Homemaker, Respite, IDLA)**

- [Preview the survey questions](#)
- [Complete the survey](#)

### **Nursing Services**

- [Preview the survey questions](#)
- [Complete the survey](#)

## Nursing Supported Group Home Services

- [Preview the survey questions](#)
- [Complete the survey](#)

## Therapy Services

- [Preview the survey questions](#)
- [Complete the survey](#)

## New Claims System

As part of the Division's Current 2 Future Initiative, DDD has partnered with WellSky, a company providing healthcare software solutions, to adapt its claims processing and to meet the industry standards for transactions and code sets, while ensuring HIPAA compliance. Using the WellSky Human Services platform will enable the Division to process provider claims for services rendered more efficiently meeting both the needs of its providers and members. The expected completion date of this project is June 2021. The Division will provide more information in the upcoming months, including vendor training to ensure vendors are prepared when the new system goes online.

## Vendor Call - Network Development Update

The Division also continues its work on the Current 2 Future Initiative related to the Vendor Call Process and Network Development. The Division is making changes and improvements including:

- Enhancements to the Vendor call system (FOCUS) to make it easier for vendors to use.
- Additional member information available in "Member profile", reducing the need to ask for more information about service needs or member and family contact information.
- Enhanced data analytics and tracking.

These changes will take effect on March 23, 2021. DDD has published a [web page specifically for the Vendor Call project](#) on its website that includes a [Frequently Asked Questions](#) document for vendors as well as a mechanism to submit additional questions [via form submission](#). This page will continue to be updated with information as the project progresses.

## Nursing Service Codes

In preparation for the Electronic Visit Verification (EVV) process, the Division is making updates to FOCUS that will change how authorizations for skilled nursing services are entered. Currently, the authorizations for the specific skilled nursing services are generic and are not specific to the proper Healthcare Common Procedure Coding System (HCPCS) code. These generic codes will cause several issues with the EVV system. The Division's FOCUS system is being updated to convert these generic codes into the proper HCPCS codes. Subsequently, after March 1, 2021 each authorization will have a HCPCS code.

The proposed changes to the FOCUS system for skilled nursing services are detailed in the table below. The new codes are the exact same HCPCS codes that all nursing agencies are using on the billing template. The only change to billing would be to use the new codes instead of both the DDD and HCPCS code. **These changes will not impact the agency's ability to staff with an RN or LPN, as necessary.**

Current Code	New Code in EVV	Service
HNV	G0299	Direct skilled nursing services of a RN in the home health setting, per hour
HNV	G0300	Direct skilled nursing services of a LPN in the home health or hospice setting, per hour
HN9	G0299	Direct skilled nursing services of a RN in the home health setting, per hour
HN9	G0300	Direct skilled nursing services of a LPN in the home health or hospice setting, per hour
HN1	S9123	Nursing care, in the home; by RN, per hour
HN1	S9124	Nursing care, in the home; by LPN, per hour
HNR	S9124	Respite, skilled nursing care; by RN
HNR	S9124	Respite, skilled nursing care; by LPN

The Division will schedule billing guidance training sessions later in January for nursing agencies to walk through the changes. The Division anticipates this will have minimal impact to our vendor network and the services provided. The change in billing codes from the 3-alpha character to HCPCS codes is industry standard.

## **Referring, Ordering, Prescribing, Attending (ROPA) Providers Required to Register with AHCCCS**

The [Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act \(ACA\)](#) and the [21st Century Cures Act \(Cures\)](#) require that all health care providers who provide services to, order (refer), prescribe, or certify health care services for AHCCCS members must be enrolled as an AHCCCS provider. Until these Acts passed, referring, ordering, prescribing and attending providers were required to obtain a National Provider Identifier (NPI), but were not required to be enrolled as an AHCCCS provider.

**In October 2020, AHCCCS announced an extension of the ROPA registration deadline to June 1, 2021. After June 1, 2021, claims which include referring, ordering, prescribing or attending providers who are not enrolled with AHCCCS will not be reimbursed.** All providers who are not currently registered with AHCCCS, but who are [referring, ordering, prescribing or attending providers](#), should register as an AHCCCS provider before June 1, 2021. See the frequently asked questions on the [AHCCCS website](#) for more information.

## **Policy Public Comment**

DDD is currently soliciting public comments regarding the following Division policies:

- (New) Division Provider Policy Manual Chapter XX, Use and Storage of Marijuana (Cannabis) In Residential Settings.
- The Division will accept public comment until February 3, 2021.

More information regarding these proposed changes and instructions for submitting comments can be found on the [DDD website](#). Complete this form, <http://bit.ly/dddpolicyupdates>, to be notified directly by email about future changes to DDD policies.

## **2021 Qualified Vendor Meeting Schedule**

As DDD continues to encourage the use of technology and social distancing in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency, a statewide model for vendor meetings is being implemented beginning in January 2021.

This enables the Division to provide consistent and timely communication to the entire vendor community. All meetings will be held virtually and participants can join via computer or phone. Meetings will be held in the morning on the second Thursday of the month and include all Qualified Vendors for a specific service line as outlined below. Meetings will no longer be organized by District and will be recorded for those who are not able to join during the times held. Login details will be emailed to Qualified Vendors/Providers prior to the meeting.

The schedule for upcoming 2021 meetings is listed below:

**Day Program/Group Home/Employment Services – Hosted by District West**

March 11, 2021, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

**Therapy Services – Hosted by District East**

April 8, 2021, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

**Developmental Home Services – Hosted by District North**

May 13, 2021, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

**Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) – Hosted by District South**

July 8, 2021, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

**Day Program/Group Home/Employment Services – Hosted by District Central**

September 9, 2021, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

**Therapy Services – Hosted by District West**

October 14, 2021, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

**Developmental Home Services – Hosted by District East**

November 4, 2021, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

The meeting schedule is also available on the [Division's website](#).

## **Payment Integrity Information Act**

On February 5, 2020, the House passed S.375, the Payment Integrity Information Act of 2019. This bill reorganizes and revises several existing improper payments statutes, including the Improper Payments Information Act of 2002 (IPIA), the Improper Payments Elimination and Recovery Act of 2010 (IPERA), the Improper Payments Elimination and Recovery Act of 2012 (IPERIA), and the Fraud Reduction and Data Analytics Act of 2015 (FRDAA). These laws established requirements for federal agencies to reduce improper payments made by the federal government. This reorganization aims to improve payment integrity for federal programs.

### **Impact on Division's Program Integrity Initiative**

In following the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) strategies, the Division continues to build upon its current program integrity efforts by increasing the use of claims data. This information is being analyzed to more efficiently detect improper payments and identify risks as well as potential areas of fraud, waste, and abuse (FWA). The Division's Program Integrity Initiative includes the use of these data analytics to more effectively educate staff, vendors and members in an effort to prevent and reduce FWA. With the Payment Integrity Information Act, the Division seeks to implement the following steps to ensure compliance with all state and federal laws and regulations:

Enhance improper payments risk assessments to address risk of potential FWA.

Develop reports on improper payments that would address identified activities deemed a risk for potential FWA, safeguards implemented to reduce the incidence of improper payments and actions taken to report and address non-compliance.

Improve monitoring and oversight via audits and post payment reviews to include vendors' implementation of their own safeguards against improper payments and controls to prevent and reduce risks for potential FWA.

The additional requirements and regulations established under the Payment Integrity Information Act demand greater accountability from the individual federal agencies. The Payment Integrity Information Act encourages agencies to take a proactive approach to prevent improper payments, rather than reactive, in eliminating and mitigating the risk for improper payments.

## **DDD Town Hall Meetings**

The Office of Individual and Family Affairs (OIFA) continues to host town hall meetings for members, families and providers. The next town hall meeting will be held on Thursday, February 4, 2021, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Please share this information with the members and families you serve and encourage them to participate. The town hall schedule and instructions to join via the Internet or phone can be found at [bit.ly/dddtownhall](https://bit.ly/dddtownhall).

## **Get Caught Up**

Did you know the Division posts vendor announcements and editions of the Shout on the web? Get caught up and stay informed on all of the recent vendor communications, <https://des.az.gov/services/disabilities/developmental-disabilities/vendors-providers/vendor-announcements>.