



DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC SECURITY

Your Partner For A Stronger Arizona

DIVISION OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

Sent on Behalf of DES/DDD

COVID-19 FLEXIBILITIES UPDATE

Target Audience - Qualified Vendors and Providers

Transmittal Date - 06/04/2021

Over the last 15 months, the COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE) has changed the way DDD and other Managed Care Organizations in Arizona support individuals who receive Medicaid benefits in Arizona. Many of these changes were implemented by AHCCCS with approval from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) in order to ensure individuals were still able to receive services while at the same time protecting the health and safety of the professionals providing those services. DDD has referred to these authorized changes as “flexibilities” since they were implemented as they allowed our program to be flexible in how services are provided.

Since the beginning of the PHE, these flexibilities were understood to be temporary and would eventually be unwound. AHCCCS worked with CMS to tie the flexibilities to the end of the PHE, which the White House has indicated will most likely last through the end of 2021. AHCCCS has recently announced changes that will impact DDD members and the professionals who support them. This information was shared with DDD staff on Thursday, June 3, 2021, and with the attendees of the Town Hall meeting held on June 3, 2021. The announced changes are outlined below.

Flexibilities Ending Prior to the Conclusion of the PHE

- Effective July 1, 2021 - All Direct Care Workers will once again be required to complete their training requirements within 90-days of being hired.*
- Effective October 1, 2021 - Annual limit of respite hours will return to 600 hours per contract year.

At this time the earliest the public health emergency will conclude is September 30, 2021, however it is likely it will be extended through the end of the calendar year, December 31, 2021.

Flexibilities Ending Upon Conclusion of the PHE

- Virtual case management (support coordination) visits for ALTCS members.**
- Reimbursement for parents offering direct care to minor children.***
- Virtual supervisory visits of Direct Care Workers.
- Home delivered meals.

*DDD is currently seeking clarification if this will also apply to DCWs who are providing Attendant Care services to their minor children, since this flexibility will end at the conclusion of the PHE.

**DDD is still considering when the resumption of in-person planning meetings will occur and the provisions of the new model. As soon as a date is determined, you will be notified.

***Federal regulations do not permit the Medicaid program under AHCCCS' 1115 Waiver to pay parents to provide personal care services to their minor children; this was only available as a result of the public health emergency. The flexibility was granted to allow members and their families options for services to continue during the pandemic to support choice in deciding whether or not to allow direct care workers into their homes to mitigate risk of exposure and to ensure continuity of services in the event direct care workers were not feeling well, became ill or decided not to work as the result of the pandemic. As a result, once the public health emergency ends, AHCCCS is no longer able to allow this service delivery model. More guidance for Support Coordinators and Network staff related to helping members and families transition services will be provided in the coming weeks.

AHCCCS is reviewing additional flexibilities and will provide more information as it becomes available.