

August 18, 2021

Dear Provider,

A brief update on the COVID-19 Delta variant and our non-emergent medical transportation (NEMT) network.

The situation:

With the surge of the COVID-19 Delta variant, the state of Oregon is on the verge of declaring a state of emergency due to the influx of COVID patients in hospitals. This impacts NEMT availability as well. We know providers and clinics are doing everything possible to manage this with the resources they have. As you work to care for these patients and, where possible, get them discharged, we wanted to provide more details around the current situation for the NEMT network.

NEMT priority:

Helping patients as they are discharged from the hospital, and making sure other CCO members can get to medically necessary appointments and services.

What we're doing:

- Alerting our NEMT partners across the region to a **possible increase in requests** for transportation.
- **Monitoring capacity** and helping to address barriers that arise.
- **Assessing needs for backup call centers** if call volume increases significantly. (This is already in progress in Clatsop, Columbia and Tillamook counties, serving our Columbia Pacific CCO members and clinics.)
- Working with NEMT partners to **screen members** who are ambulatory and/or have someone in their household, a family, or a friend who has a vehicle and get set them up for ride reimbursement.
- Working with NEMT partners to **transition ambulatory members** who have no physical or behavioral needs to safely using public transit, when possible.
- Ensuring transportation needs are prioritized for **those with critical, life-sustaining needs** and/or rides for **members who are at highest risk**.
- **If capacity is severely impacted**, we may temporarily restrict NEMT service to members with critical, life-sustaining needs and/or members who are at highest risk. In that case, **CCOs may approve alternative transportation options** that support members getting to and from their health care appointments. This may include, but is not limited to:
 - Uber or Lyft
 - Local cab companies
 - Other private commercial transportation options

Reimbursements for these alternative options can be offered to health care providers

and/or members directly. It is important to retain copies of receipts, if possible, to expedite processing these requests.

How you can help:

1. Understand that it may be difficult for us to respond to last-minute requests or patients who need a higher level of service.
2. Schedule members for appointments well in advance, so they can contact their NEMT provider and the provider can plan better for needed capacity.
3. Communicate with patients about postponed or canceled appointments, clinic closures and so on.
4. Remind patients to cancel any transportation requests when appointments have been canceled. This helps avoid deploying drivers unnecessarily, which impacts access.
5. Supply NEMT partners with all requested documentation when moving members to a higher level of transportation (i.e., vehicle-provided rides). This allows NEMT providers to meet member needs quickly.

We will continue to update our website and provider portal as the situation develops. [Here are ways you can stay informed:](#)

- Visit our online provider portal or our website
- Call Provider Customer Service: 800-224-4840, option 3

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Thank you,
CareOregon