



**State of Louisiana**  
Louisiana Department of Health  
Bureau of Health Services Financing

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** March 10, 2020  
**TO:** All Louisiana Medicaid Providers  
**FROM:** Erin Campbell, Acting Medicaid Director *EC*  
**SUBJECT:** Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Provider Update: 3.10.2020

The below advisory is to inform all providers rendering services to Louisiana Medicaid members, including members of all Healthy Louisiana managed care organizations (MCOs). This information will be updated as new information is available.

For current updates on the status of COVID-19 in Louisiana, please see the Office of Public Health (OPH) COVID-19 website, located at: <http://ldh.la.gov/coronavirus>.

The below information is provided in relation to COVID-19 in Louisiana.

**Identification, Testing, and Reporting of Suspected Patients**

Providers should follow guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) when evaluating patients with suspected illness. This information is located at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/clinical-criteria.html>

The State Public Health Laboratory has validated testing for COVID-19, and now has the ability to test within Louisiana. To submit tests to the State Laboratory, providers should obtain a detailed history for all patients being evaluated with fever and acute respiratory illness. Patients with clinical features AND epidemiologic risk factors without another possible etiology (i.e., influenza) should be immediately reported to the OPH Infectious Disease Epidemiology Hotline at 1-800-256-2748.

Effective for dates of service on or after March 5, 2020, Louisiana Medicaid covers commercial COVID-19 testing, without restrictions or prior authorization, for members that have symptoms compatible with COVID-19. This coverage is provided with no copay. Testing of asymptomatic patients is not recommended and considered not medically necessary at this time. Providers should immediately report positive COVID-19 commercial laboratory results to the OPH Infectious Disease Epidemiology Hotline at 1-800-256-2748.

For reimbursement of commercial COVID-19 tests, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has created two new procedure codes. At this time, providers should hold their

claims for COVID-19 tests and when Louisiana Medicaid receives the necessary information from CMS to update claims processing systems and provide guidance to Healthy Louisiana MCOs, providers will be notified and this advisory will be updated.

Of note, commercially available respiratory viral panel tests, represented by CPT codes 87631, 87632, and 87633, are not appropriate for diagnosing suspected COVID-19 at this time. While these panels may include coronavirus targets, they do not reliably cross-react with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, because it is a novel coronavirus. False positives and false negatives can delay appropriate diagnosis and treatment. Therefore, these tests are considered not medically necessary for this purpose.

### **Testing and Treatment Coverage**

For all Medicaid members, testing is covered with no copay. In addition, clinic visits, emergency department visits, and hospitalizations related to COVID-19 testing and treatment are covered without copays.

### **Telemedicine**

Louisiana Medicaid encourages the use of telemedicine, when appropriate, to decrease the potential for patient-to-patient transmission in shared spaces (e.g., waiting rooms) and patient-to-provider transmission. Telemedicine may be used to evaluate patients who report respiratory and systemic symptoms, for example, in a non-emergency situation when a face-to-face visit is not necessary. Further, telemedicine may be used to provide routine care for older patients, or those with chronic illnesses, for the purpose of reducing their exposure to healthcare facilities.

Louisiana Medicaid, including all Healthy Louisiana MCOs, allows for the telemedicine mode of delivery for many common healthcare services. When otherwise covered by Louisiana Medicaid, telemedicine is allowed for all Common Procedural Terminology (CPT) codes located in Appendix P of the CPT manual. These codes include, but are not limited to, new and established outpatient office visit codes.

Claims submitted for telemedicine services must indicate place of service 02 and must have modifier -95 appended. Reimbursement for visits delivered via telemedicine is similar to face-to-face visits, subject to any terms and conditions in provider contracts with Medicaid MCOs. Providers should contact their contracted MCO for information that may affect billing procedures and reimbursement rates.

There is currently no formal limitation on the originating site (i.e., where the patient is located) and this can include, but is not limited to, a healthcare facility, school, or the patient's home. Regardless of the originating site, providers must maintain adequate medical documentation to support reimbursement of the visit.

Providers offering services via telemedicine must use a secure, HIPAA-compliant platform and adhere to all telemedicine-related requirements of their professional licensing board.

### **Vaccine**

At this time there is no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. When a federally-approved vaccine is available, it will be covered for all Medicaid members with no copay.

**Coding**

To ensure proper reporting, providers should follow CDC's Official Coding Guideline when selecting a diagnosis code.

This guideline is available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/icd/icd10cm.htm>

**Resources for Patients**

For questions or updates on the status of COVID-19 in Louisiana, please direct your patients to the Office of Public Health's COVID-19 web site at <http://ldh.la.gov/coronavirus>. They may also call the COVID-19 general information line at 1-855-523-2652 from 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.