

Appointment availability and after-hours standards

UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of Missouri

We want to support you and your staff in achieving the best possible health outcomes for our members by offering timely access to their covered services. Please see these appointment availability and after-hours standards set by the Missouri Department of Social Services.

Appointment availability standards

Appointment type (PCPs and specialists)	Required time frame
Urgent care	Within 24 hours
Routine care with symptoms	Within 5 business days
Routine care without symptoms	Within 30 calendar days
After-hours access	24/7 phone coverage with instructions for urgent/emergent care
After-care following hospital discharge	Within 7 calendar days
Maternity care – initial prenatal appointments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First trimester: Within 7 calendar days of the first request• Second trimester: Within 7 calendar days of the first request• Third trimester: Within 3 calendar days of the first request• High-risk pregnancy: Within 3 calendar days of identification of high risk to the health plan or maternity care provider, or immediately if an emergency exists

After-hours or 24/7 access standards

Primary care providers (PCPs) and specialists must be available to members after hours, or 24 hours per day, 7 days a week.

Acceptable after-hours coverage

The following are examples of acceptable responses for 24/7 or after-hours access:

- The telephone is answered by the care provider, office staff, answering service or voicemail
- The answering service:
 - Connects the caller directly to the care provider
 - Contacts the care provider and the care provider returns the call
 - Provides a telephone number where the care provider or covering care provider can be reached
- The voicemail provides a phone number for after-hours coverage

After-hours voicemails should also begin by instructing the caller to dial 911 for life-threatening emergencies or go to emergency room.

Unacceptable after-hours coverage

The following are examples of unacceptable responses for 24/7 or after-hours access:

- Office or answering service hangs up
- The care provider's voicemail system:
 - Instructs the caller to go to the emergency room for non-emergent situations
 - Instructs the caller to leave a message for the care provider in an urgent situation
- There's no answer
- The caller is placed on hold for longer than 5 minutes
- The telephone lines are persistently busy despite multiple attempts to contact

We conduct periodic access surveys to help ensure all access and availability standards are met.

Allowable office waiting times

Members with appointments should not wait longer than 1 hour from the scheduled appointment time.

Resources

You can find detailed information about appointment availability, after-hours access and allowable office waiting times in our [Community Plan of Missouri Care Provider Manual](#).



Questions? Please call Provider Services at **866-815-5334**.