



BRAD LITTLE – Governor
DAVE JEPPESEN – Director

IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & WELFARE

MATT WIMMER - Administrator
DIVISION OF MEDICAID
Post Office Box 83720
Boise, Idaho 83720-0009
PHONE: (208) 334-5747
FAX: (208) 364-1811

May 1, 2019

MEDICAID INFORMATION RELEASE MA 19-06

TO: All Medicaid Providers

FROM: Matt Wimmer, Administrator
Division of Medicaid

SUBJECT: Elimination of Healthy Connections Referrals for Urgent Care

Effective July 1, 2019, a Healthy Connections (HC) referral will not be required for members to access Urgent Care centers that meet certain criteria. Idaho Medicaid recognizes the role Urgent Care centers play in the transformation of the healthcare delivery system. Urgent Care centers fill the gap between traditional hospital emergency rooms and primary care clinics by offering walk-in care, extended hours and the immediate treatment of urgent, non-life-threatening illnesses or injuries. In addition, reducing excessive emergency room (ER) use continues to be a challenge, and lack of access to primary care outside common office hours is frequently cited as the reason for an ER visit.

A key to successfully incorporating Urgent Care services in the Patient Centered Medical Home (PCMH) model of care in Idaho, will be the **timely communication between the Urgent Care centers with the Primary Care Providers** to provide the best integrated patient care. When Urgent Care and Primary Care work together, *the medical neighborhood is expanded and the patient wins*. With appropriate coordination, this highly utilized health care access point can successfully be integrated into the larger PCMH network in Idaho. Urgent Care centers can supplement a Primary Care practice's health care services by:

- Accepting overflow volume when the practice is at capacity
- Providing walk-in coverage when the Primary Care practice is closed
- Providing services not typically offered at the Primary Care practice, such as x-rays, lab testing, and medical procedures such as suturing and casting
- Referring patients with chronic illnesses to the Primary Care provider

The following parameters must be met to be considered an **Urgent Care center with no HC referral required**:

1. Evaluate and treat a broad spectrum of illness and injury
2. Walk-in appointments are the primary scheduling model
3. Posted hours of operation to include:
 - a. Open at least one hour daily outside of the standard Monday-Friday 8:00-5:00
 - b. Open a minimum of 4 hours on the weekend
4. Primary healthcare delivery model is Urgent Care (not Primary Care)
5. Clearly be identified as an Urgent Care Center both physically and in marketing material

In addition, **Urgent Care Centers are required to**:

1. Communicate the visit summary directly to the patient's HC Primary Care Provider (PCP) within three (3) days of the visit. At a minimum, this shall include:
 - a. Facts and findings
 - b. Prescriptions and DME ordered
 - c. Other pertinent healthcare information
2. Direct the patient to their HC Primary Care Provider
 - a. For ongoing treatment or coordination of chronic/complex conditions
 - b. When secondary or specialty care is needed
 - c. For those seeking wellness services
3. Educate patients when urgent care is appropriate

The Urgent Care Center will be subject to periodic evaluation of policy compliance. **Failure to meet these requirements may result in services considered non-covered and subject to recoupment and/or a civil monetary penalty.**

As the transition date approaches, the Idaho Medicaid Provider Handbook and the Idaho Member Health Plan booklet will be updated to include that Urgent Care access no longer requires a Healthy Connections referral. If you have any questions regarding this change, please contact your regional Healthy Connections Representative or the Healthy Connections Consolidated Unit at 888-528-5861.