



MEPD and TW Bulletin 22-20

Date: December 01, 2022

To: Eligibility Services Supervisors and Staff
Program Managers
Regional Directors
Regional Attorneys
Hearings Officers

From: Access and Eligibility Services Program Policy
State Office 2115

Subject: **1. COVID-19 Update: Additional Emergency Allotment Supplement**
2. COVID-19 Policy Update: Processing Case Actions for Medical Programs
3. COVID-19 Update: Extended Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Certification Periods

The information in this bulletin will be included in a future handbook revision. Until the handbook is updated, staff must use the information in this bulletin. If you have any questions regarding the policy information in this bulletin, follow regional procedures.

Active bulletins are posted on the following websites:

- [Medicaid for the Elderly and People with Disabilities Handbook \(MEPDH\)](https://hhs.texas.gov/laws-regulations/handbooks/mepd/policy-bulletins) at <https://hhs.texas.gov/laws-regulations/handbooks/mepd/policy-bulletins>;
- [Texas Works Handbook \(TWH\)](http://hhs.texas.gov/laws-regulations/handbooks/texas-works-handbook/texas-works-bulletins) at <http://hhs.texas.gov/laws-regulations/handbooks/texas-works-handbook/texas-works-bulletins>.

1. COVID-19 Update: Additional Emergency Allotment Supplement

Background

On January 27, 2020, the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services declared that a public health emergency exists nationwide due to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. Additionally, on March 13, 2020, Governor Greg Abbott also declared a state of disaster for all counties in Texas due to the COVID-19 outbreak. HHSC is providing the following temporary guidance regarding policies and procedures for processing case actions during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

COVID-19 Policy

SNAP

HHSC has been granted approval from the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to issue December 2022 Emergency Allotment (EA) supplements to participating Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) households. Households approved for SNAP in December 2022 will automatically be issued supplements to bring the household up to the maximum monthly allotment for the household's size. All SNAP households will receive a minimum of \$95 in EA supplements.

All EA supplements will be automatically issued on the SNAP household's existing EBT card. SNAP households do not need to take any action to receive EA supplements.

HHSC will issue EA supplements for December on a randomized staggered schedule starting Dec. 5, 2022. The expected completion of December EA supplement issuance for active SNAP households is Dec. 12, 2022. Households determined eligible for SNAP after Dec. 12, 2022, will be issued their supplement within approximately 60 days from disposition. Staff call in a ticket when the SNAP household reports not receiving the supplement by that timeframe.

TIERS will add the following case comment "COVID-19 SNAP supplements issued" for a case where the EA supplement was issued. HHSC will not send a notice to households regarding the EA supplement.

Additionally, during the pandemic, Quality Control and other case reading reviews will continue to ensure accuracy. Although SNAP households will receive a minimum of \$95 in EA supplements, staff must still ensure regular monthly benefits are calculated correctly when processing any case actions.

Automation

December EA supplements for active SNAP households are expected to be issued between Dec. 5, 2022, and Dec. 12, 2022. Households determined eligible for SNAP after Dec. 12, 2022, will be issued their December EA supplement within approximately 60 days from disposition.

Correspondence

Correspondence changes are not required.

Handbook

Handbook updates are not required.

Training

Training is not required.

Effective Date

This policy is effective with the release of this bulletin.

2. COVID-19 Policy Update: Processing Case Actions for Medical Programs

Background

On January 27, 2020, the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services declared that a public health emergency exists nationwide due to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. Additionally, on March 13, 2020, Governor Greg Abbott also declared a state of disaster for all counties in Texas due to the COVID-19 outbreak. HHSC is providing the following temporary guidance regarding policies and procedures for processing case actions during the COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE).

COVID-19 Policy

Medical Programs

This update clarifies the following guidance previously issued for allowable Medicaid denials during the COVID-19 PHE.

- MEPD and Texas Works Bulletin 20-4, Item #6 Processing Case Actions for Medical Programs;
- MEPD and Texas Works Bulletin 20-06, Item #3 Maintaining Medicaid Coverage;
- MEPD and Texas Works Bulletin 20-10, Item #4 Update: Processing Case Actions for Medicaid Programs;
- MEPD and Texas Works Bulletin 20-13, Item #1 Update: Processing Case Actions for Medicaid Programs;
- MEPD and Texas Works Bulletin 21-07, Item #1 COVID-19 Update: Processing Denial Actions for Medicaid Programs; and
- MEPD and Texas Works Bulletin 22-02, Item #2 COVID-19 Update: Processing Denial Actions for Medicaid Programs.

HR 6201 (Families First Coronavirus Response Act) requires states to maintain Medicaid coverage until the end of the month in which the COVID-19 public health emergency ends for most people active or certified for Medicaid as of or after March 18, 2020.

Do not deny a person receiving Medicaid as of March 18, 2020, unless the person:

- voluntarily withdraws;
- dies;
- moves out of state; or

- is considered invalidly enrolled due to being certified in error at application or HHSC's Office of Inspector General (OIG) has determined the person fraudulently received Medicaid and coverage should be denied.

A person who is determined eligible for Medicaid as of or after March 18, 2020, must not be denied Medicaid coverage before the end of the public health emergency except for one of the reasons listed above.

COVID-19 Policy Clarification

Medical Programs

After an initial determination of eligibility, Medicaid must be maintained for the duration of the COVID-19 PHE.

If a person is certified for at least one month of coverage, including one or more of the three prior months from the application file date, Medicaid coverage must be maintained for all subsequent month(s) through the end of the PHE unless the person:

- voluntarily withdraws;
- dies;
- moves out of state; or
- is considered invalidly enrolled due to being certified in error at application or HHSC's OIG has determined the person fraudulently received Medicaid and coverage should be denied.

Automation

To ensure Medicaid is maintained during the COVID-19 PHE for a person eligible for at least one month of coverage, TIERS will automatically reinstate terminated Medicaid EDGs back to active status after disposition and add the following case comment: *"Medicaid eligibility is being sustained due to COVID-19."*

Additional automation updates were captured to correct Medicaid EDGs that were previously terminated in error after the person was only certified for prior months coverage.

Changes to TIERS are currently scheduled to be implemented with TIERS Release 114.2 on January 14, 2023.

Correspondence

Correspondence changes are not required.

TIERS will continue to add this additional note on the TF0001 in the Medicaid Section for Medicaid EDGs currently maintained due to the PHE:

"A federal public health emergency was declared on Jan. 27, 2020, which allows your Medicaid coverage to continue for the duration of the federally declared emergency. Since the federal public health emergency has been extended, HHSC will continue your coverage until the public health emergency ends. You are getting this notice because a review of your most recent information indicates you will not be eligible for Medicaid coverage when the public health emergency ends."

Handbook

Handbook updates are not required.

Training

Training is not required.

Effective Date

This policy is effective with the implementation of TIERS Release 114.2 currently scheduled for January 14, 2023.

3. COVID-19 Update: Extended Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Certification Periods

Background

On January 27, 2020, the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services declared that a public health emergency exists nationwide due to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. Additionally, on March 13, 2020, Governor Greg Abbott also declared a state of disaster for all counties in Texas due to the COVID-19 outbreak. HHSC is providing the following temporary guidance regarding policies and procedures for processing case actions during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

COVID-19 Policy

SNAP

SNAP renewals due in December 2022, who were not previously extended in June 2022, will be automatically extended by six months to June 2023. This policy applies to all SNAP households, including TSAP, SNAP-SSI and SNAP-CAP recipients. SNAP households previously extended in June 2022 to December 2022 will be required to complete a SNAP redetermination.

TIERS automation will adjust the recertification due dates for households who receive the extension. No staff action is needed to extend SNAP certification periods.

Staff Procedures

If a redetermination packet is received:

1. Perform inquiry to determine if the SNAP household received an extended certification period to June 2023. Cases that receive an extension will have the following language in case comments: "SNAP certification period automatically extended due to COVID-19."
 - a. If an extension was not received, continue processing the SNAP redetermination following current policy and procedures.
 - b. If an extension was received, do not initiate the redetermination. Review the redetermination packet to determine if a change in address or a request for additional program(s) is included:
 - i. If yes, process the application or change of address following current policies and procedures.
 - ii. If no, document in case comments, "SNAP extended, no other programs/address change requested" and clear the task.

Automation

TIERS will automatically extend active SNAP EDGs with recertifications due in December 2022 beginning on December 13, 2022. TIERS will also add the following information in case comments, "SNAP certification period automatically extended due to COVID-19."

Note: SNAP recertifications that were previously extended in June 2022 are excluded from this automated process.

Correspondence

Households will receive a notice informing them of the extension and their new certification period.

Handbook

Handbook updates are not required.

Training

Training is not required.

Effective Date

This policy is effective with the release of this bulletin. Staff will be notified when COVID-19 policy and clarifications no longer apply.