



MEPD and Texas Works Bulletin 20-15

Date: June 5, 2020

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: COVID-19 Policy Update #10

The information in this bulletin provides temporary guidance regarding policies and procedures for processing case actions during the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. Staff will be notified when the COVID-19 policy and clarifications should no longer be used for processing case actions and determining eligibility. 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>.

COVID-19 Policy Update # 10

Background

On March 13, 2020, Governor Greg Abbott declared a state of disaster for all counties in Texas due to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. On the same date, President Donald J. Trump declared a national emergency. Guidance from state and federal leaders emphasize the need for social distancing and limiting contact with others during this time. In light of this guidance, HHSC is temporarily modifying its current eligibility policies to accommodate processing of applications and renewals.

1. Update: Processing Case Actions for Medicaid Programs

Medicaid for the Elderly and People with Disabilities (MEPD)

Guidance previously issued in the following bulletins provided staff with policy and processes for processing case actions that would result in the denial of active Medicaid EDGs:

- 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; and
- MEPD and Texas Works Bulletin 20-13, Item #1 Update: Processing Case Actions for Medicaid Programs.

This update replaces the previous guidance. Staff can now dispose all MEPD case actions and will no longer need to suspend case actions in EWMS that would result in the termination of the MEPD EDG.

To ensure Medicaid is maintained during the COVID-19 public health emergency, TIERS will automatically reinstate terminated Medicaid EDGs back to active status after disposal and add the following case comment: *"Medicaid eligibility is being sustained due to COVID-19."*

Exceptions:

TIERS will not automatically reinstate a terminated Medicaid EDG back to active status if:

- the person is subsequently certified for another Medicaid program that has the same or better benefits as the original Medicaid type of assistance; or

- the EDG is terminated because a non-Head of Household Medicaid recipient moves out of the household. As a reminder, moving out the household is not a valid reason to deny a recipient's Medicaid during the COVID-19 public health emergency unless the person moves out of state. To ensure these recipients continue to receive Medicaid benefits, staff must:
 - update the date on the **Individual Household Status** page and select "Out of Household." TIERS will remove the recipient from the household's other benefits (SNAP, TANF or both) and terminate the recipient's Medicaid EDG.
 - manually create a new case using the information from the old case and the recipient's new address. Certify the recipient for Medicaid on the new case and retain the original renewal due date.
 - if the Head of Household reports that the recipient has left the household and does not report a new address, create a new case using the address from the old case. Do not pend for the new address. Certify the recipient for Medicaid on the new case and retain the original renewal due date.
 - add case comments "*Medicaid eligibility is being sustained due to COVID-19.*"

Additional Guidance for Certain Case Actions

Program Transfers

When processing a request for a program transfer, if the recipient is determined not eligible for the new program, or requested information is not provided, run EDBC to deny the new EDG. To ensure Medicaid is maintained during the COVID-19 public health emergency, TIERS will sustain eligibility for the existing EDG and add the following case comment: "*Medicaid eligibility is being sustained due to COVID-19.*"

Add a Person

When processing a request to add a person to an existing case, update the **Individual Household LUW**. If the new person is not eligible, TIERS will retain the approved budget and EDG for the existing person. The new person will be denied once the case is disposed by staff.

Remove a Person from the Budget Group

When one member of a couple case dies, update the **Individual Household LUW** to remove the person. If the remaining person is eligible for the same program as an individual, TIERS will approve the person with an individual budget. If the remaining person is not eligible as an individual, TIERS will retain the previous approved couple budget and mark the other person as ineligible.

If one member of couple case moves out of the facility and does not request a program transfer, update the **Individual Household LUW** to remove the person. TIERS will sustain eligibility for both recipients on the existing Medicaid EDG.

If one member of couple case moves out of the facility and is eligible for another Medicaid program that has the same or better benefits as the original type of assistance, process the program transfer request. TIERS will sustain eligibility for the recipient in the facility as an individual and transfer the other recipient to the new Medicaid program.

Automation

Automation changes for MEPD are scheduled to be implemented on June 6, 2020 with TIERS Release 107.

Correspondence

Recipients will not receive a notice when a terminated Medicaid EDG is reinstated back to active status. However, if a TF0001, Notice of Case Action, is generated for any other program, TIERS will add the following information in the Medicaid Section:

"Your Medicaid coverage will continue through the COVID-19 pandemic. If you no longer qualify for Medicaid after the pandemic ends, we will notify you when your coverage will end and what you will need to do to reapply."

Handbook

Handbook updates are not required.

Training

Training is not required.

Effective Date

The policy is effective with the implementation of TIERS Release 107 on June 6, 2020. Staff will be notified when the COVID-19 policy and clarifications no longer apply.

2. Additional Emergency Allotment Supplement

COVID-19 Policy Information

SNAP

HHSC has been granted approval from the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to issue June 2020 emergency allotment (EA) supplements to participating Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) households. Households who

are approved for SNAP in June 2020 will automatically be issued supplements that will bring the household up to the maximum monthly allotment for the household's size.

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.

Note: SNAP households that already receive the maximum monthly allotment for their household size are not eligible for EA supplements.

Starting June 7, 2020, EA supplements for June will be issued on a randomized staggered schedule. The issuance of June EA supplements for active SNAP households are expected to be completed by June 11, 2020. Households who are determined eligible for SNAP after June 11, 2020, including households who receive a prorated allotment, will be issued their supplement by the end of June.

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

Automation

June EA supplements for active SNAP households are expected to be issued between June 7, 2020, and June 11, 2020. Any newly certified SNAP households will be issued EA supplements before the end of June.

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. Staff will be notified when the COVID-19 policy and clarifications no longer apply.