

**NUMBER**

#20-21-02

**DATE**

April 29, 2020

**OF INTEREST TO**

County Directors

Social Services Supervisors and  
Staff

Financial Assistance Supervisors  
and Staff

Tribal Chairpersons and Tribal  
Health Directors

Health Care Eligibility  
Operations (HCEO) Managers,  
Supervisors and Staff

**ACTION/DUE DATE**

Please read and follow issued  
instructions. Additional  
instructions will follow.

**EXPIRATION DATE**

April 29, 2022

## DHS Announces Temporary Policy Changes to Minnesota Health Care Programs During the COVID-19 Peacetime Emergency

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### TOPIC

Temporary policy changes to ensure enrollees maintain Minnesota Health Care Programs coverage during the COVID-19 peacetime emergency.

### PURPOSE

This bulletin provides information about Minnesota Health Care Programs (MHCP) policy changes during the COVID-19 peacetime emergency. These temporary policies will:

- Ensure Minnesotans have access to critical health care programs at a time when they need it most, and
- Maintain uninterrupted health care coverage for Minnesotans enrolled in MHCP during the public health emergency.

### CONTACT

County, tribal agencies and DHS workers should submit Medical Assistance (MA) and MinnesotaCare policy questions via HealthQuest.

All others should direct MA and MinnesotaCare questions to:

Health Care Eligibility and Access (HCEA) Division  
PO Box 64989  
540 Cedar Street St. Paul, MN 55164-0989

### SIGNED

MATT ANDERSON  
Assistant Commissioner/State Medicaid Director  
Health Care Administration

### TERMINOLOGY NOTICE

The terminology used to describe people we serve has changed over time. The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the use of "People First" language.

# I. Background

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On March 20, 2020, Governor Walz issued Emergency Executive Orders 20-11 and 20-12, which permit the commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) to seek federal authority to change or waive federal requirements applicable to its programs and services and to temporarily waive or modify provisions of certain state statutes and applicable rules. For more information and links to the executive orders, visit the department's [COVID-19 webpage](#).

This bulletin discusses temporary policy changes to Medical Assistance (MA) and MinnesotaCare in accordance with the executive orders and as federally approved, for the duration of the COVID-19 peacetime emergency. These temporary policy changes will ensure that Minnesota Health Care Programs (MHCP) enrollees have continued access to essential health care coverage and services without undue delays. DHS will issue another bulletin to provide information about when and how these temporary policies will expire.

The policy changes in this bulletin apply to all of the following Medical Assistance populations and subprograms:

- Medical Assistance for Families with Children and Adults (MA-FCA)
- Medical Assistance for People Age 65 and Older, Blind or Disabled (MA-ABD)
- Medical Assistance for Employed Persons with Disabilities (MA-EPD)
- Medical Assistance under the TEFRA Option
- Medical Assistance Northstar Care for Children
- Medical Assistance for the Treatment of Breast and Cervical Cancer (MA-BC)
- Medical Assistance for People Receiving Services at the Center for Victims of Torture (MA-CVT)
- Medicare Savings Programs (MSP): Qualified Medicare Beneficiaries (QMB), Service Limited Medicare Beneficiaries (SLMB), Qualified Individuals (QI) and Qualified Working Disabled (QWD)
- Emergency Medical Assistance (EMA)
- Minnesota Family Planning Program (MFPP)

The temporary policy changes in this bulletin apply to all MinnesotaCare populations, including MinnesotaCare for Deferred Action Childhood Arrivals.

These policy changes apply to all MA and MinnesotaCare enrollees including enrollees from or receiving services from a Tribal Nation.

## A. Restoration of Coverage

Effective April 1, 2020, DHS restored coverage for all people who had been enrolled in MA and MinnesotaCare and were set to close March 31, 2020, except those who were deceased, were no longer state residents or requested their coverage be closed. Enrollees whose coverage was restored included people who were set to close for a variety of reasons, including but not limited to, failure to renew, failure to resolve outstanding verifications during a reasonable opportunity period, failure to resolve a periodic data match or other discrepancy, and failure to pay premiums. When possible, MA and MinnesotaCare enrollees who received March coverage through managed care plans were reenrolled into the same managed care plans for April. Enrollees who were not reenrolled into managed care

received covered services on a fee-for-service basis. DHS mailed notices to these enrollees on April 22, 2020, to inform them that their coverage was reopened.

For the duration of the COVID-19 peacetime emergency, MA and MinnesotaCare enrollees, including enrollees whose coverage was restored April 1, 2020, will remain covered, unless the enrollee is deceased, is no longer a state resident or voluntarily requests closure.

## **B. Suspension of Renewals**

Beginning with April 2020 renewals, DHS has temporarily suspended six-month renewals, annual renewals, six-month income reviews and monthly household reporting forms. DHS will not mail these to MA enrollees beginning with May 2020 renewals for cases supported in MAXIS. DHS will not mail MA and MinnesotaCare need-to-renew (NTR) forms to enrollees beginning with June 2020 renewals for cases supported in the Minnesota Eligibility Technology System (METS). DHS will continue to mail auto-renewal (AR) notices to enrollees on METS cases.

For the duration of the COVID-19 peacetime emergency, MA and MinnesotaCare enrollees will maintain coverage regardless of regularly scheduled renewals and redeterminations unless the enrollee is deceased, is no longer a state resident or voluntarily requests closure.

## **C. Changes in Circumstances**

Beginning April 1, 2020, do not act on changes in circumstances for MA or MinnesotaCare enrollees that would result in the loss of coverage, reduction in benefits or increase in cost sharing unless the enrollee is deceased, is no longer a state resident or voluntarily requests closure. This applies to changes required to be reported by enrollees, or their authorized representatives, and those generally not required to be reported such as a change in age, that changes the enrollee's basis of MA eligibility. Continue to act on other changes in circumstance.

MA and MinnesotaCare enrollees, and their authorized representatives, must continue to report changes in circumstances that affect eligibility, such as changes to income, assets (if they are subject to an asset test), household composition, address and access to other health insurance coverage.

For the duration of the COVID-19 peacetime emergency, MA and MinnesotaCare enrollees will maintain coverage regardless of changes in circumstances, unless the enrollee is deceased, is no longer a state resident or voluntarily requests closure.

## **D. Premiums and Fees**

DHS will continue to send monthly premium billings to MA-EPD and MinnesotaCare enrollees. If enrollees report a decrease in their income, their premium amount must be recalculated. In the case of MinnesotaCare enrollees, a change in income may result in eligibility for MA.

MA-EPD and MinnesotaCare enrollees unable to pay their monthly premiums timely during the COVID-19 peacetime emergency will not lose their coverage, however, they will be expected to pay all past due premiums after the emergency ends.

MA-EPD enrollees may continue to submit good cause claims if they are unable to pay their premiums. See [EPM, Section 2.3.5.1.2 MA-EPD Premiums and Cost Sharing](#) for more information.

For the duration of the COVID-19 peacetime emergency, MA-EPD and MinnesotaCare enrollees will maintain coverage if they cannot pay their monthly premiums timely.

## E. Data Matching

Beginning April 1, 2020, DHS suspended periodic data matching (PDM) for MA and MinnesotaCare enrollees with eligibility in METS. Income Eligibility Verification System (IEVS) data matches will continue to run for MA enrollees with eligibility in MAXIS. Do not request follow-up information or act on IEVS matches that would result in an enrollee losing coverage, having a reduction in MA benefits or increase in cost sharing.

The public assistance reporting information system (PARIS) interstate match will continue to run for MA enrollees with eligibility in MAXIS and METS. DHS will provide instructions to county and tribal agencies about how to handle the next PARIS matches during the COVID-19 peacetime emergency.

For the duration of the COVID-19 peacetime emergency, MA and MinnesotaCare enrollees will maintain coverage regardless of data matching that occurs between renewals, unless the enrollee is deceased, is no longer a state resident or voluntarily requests closure.

## II. Action Required

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County, tribal and DHS workers must follow the policies outlined in this bulletin and instructions issued in advance of, and following, the publication of this bulletin. DHS will issue instructions through SIR announcements, video conferences and other communications.

Workers can find procedures for implementing the policies outlined in this bulletin on the [COVID-19 ONEsource](#) page.

## Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Advisory

This information is available in accessible formats for people with disabilities by calling 651-297-3862 or toll free at 800-657-3672 or by using your preferred relay service. For other information on disability rights and protections, contact the agency's ADA coordinator.