

TO: THO Clinic Partners
FR: ANTHC
RE: Medicaid Travel during COVID-19
DT: April 6, 2020

The following outlines key highlights from the most recent mandates from the State of Alaska regarding Medicaid travel dated April 3, 2020

Highlights from State of Alaska Medicaid Travel Necessity & Letters of Medical Necessity

As of Friday, April 3, 2020, the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) Travel Management Office (TMO) received updated guidelines for completing Letters of Medical Necessity (LOMN) for all Medicaid travel during this time of restricted travel.

As we attempt to balance the requirements of the Governor's health mandates with urgent patient needs, we are reviewing medical necessity more carefully to avoid preventable spread of COVID-19.

Any request for Medicaid travel through ANTHC TMO will need to have a LOMN attached with the following clearly outlined:

- 1. Clinics must provide additional detail describing how patient's needs outweigh risks, both to the patient and other community members.***
- 2. Telehealth is available, could it be utilized for this appointment? If no, the provider will need to explain why telehealth can't be utilized.***
- 3. Has the medical provider reviewed the risks of travel with the patient?***
- 4. Does the patient understand the risks?***
- 5. Does the patient understand they may be responsible for their own lodging and meals if they travel and no longer meet the Medicaid Travel Guidelines?***

A provider can sign the note electronically –physical signature not required.

Medicaid Behavioral Health Guidelines

As of Friday, March 27, 2020, the ANTHC TMO received Medicaid travel guidelines for behavioral health. The Department of Behavioral Health made the following decisions on what is considered Medically Necessary Travel – based on mandated quarantines being established at local, state and national levels and the ability for facilities/providers to offer the needed quarantine space.

Per the State of Alaska, and as of March 27, 23 Alaska villages have issued travel bans to meet the health and safety of the population.

The State of Alaska Department of Behavioral Health has determined that the only Medically Necessary travel meets the criteria for both Medicaid and DET Travel:

- Travel for an Acute Psychiatric Placement (Level VI, DET Beds)***
- Travel for placement in a Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility (PRTF – Level V)***
- Travel from an Acute/DET or PRTF placement to a Lower Level of care upon discharge***
- Travel from a lower level of care (Level II – IV) to another lower level of care – home or Therapeutic***
- Foster Care upon discharge***
- Travel from the lowest level of care (TFC) to home of parent and/or guardian upon discharge***
- Residential Substance Use Disorder (SUD) providers will notice that travel to and from a Residential SUD facility is not considered Medically Necessary.***

Original Medicaid Restricted Travel Guidelines

As of April 3, 2020, ANTHC TMO received notification from State of Alaska of the restricted Medicaid travel guidelines. Highlights include:

- Medicaid travel is limited to **only** those **services that cannot be postponed for 3 months** (e.g., facility discharges, emergency ambulance transports, acute psychiatric events, urgent surgery). This decision follows the Alaska State Chief Medical Officer’s advisory requesting that providers postpone non-urgent and elective services.
- All travel authorization requests must include written documentation explaining why the service for which the recipient needs to travel cannot be postponed for up to 3 months.
- This impacts all travel (in-state, inter-region and ground)
- All travel that cannot be postponed must have detailed LOMN from the receiving provider outlining:
 - Why the appointment cannot be postponed
 - What is the urgency
 - Must list doctor
- Anyone that has to be quarantined must be reviewed and approved by the State of Alaska

The ANTHC TMO has been returning any request for travel that has not yet been coordinated. This includes asking the requestor if appointments can be postponed.

If a travel ban is in place in the member’s community of residence and a request is received for urgent travel, request a letter from the village leaders allowing the member to return to the village once the medical services are completed. If a letter cannot be obtain, contact the State to review.

Below is the current list that is being maintained by the State of Alaska on villages that either have travel restrictions and/or bans. The below list is being updated and will be distributed next week:

Region	Village	Travel Ban and/or Restrictions	Region	Village	Travel Ban and/or Restrictions
Bethel	Akiachak	Yes	North Slope Borough	Utquiagvik (Barrow)	Yes
Bethel	Akiak	Yes	North Slope Borough	Point Hope	Yes
Bethel	Alakanuk	Yes	North Slope Borough	Point Lay	Yes
Bethel	Aniak	Yes	North Slope Borough	Wainwright	Yes
Bethel	Anvik	Yes	North Slope Borough	Atkasuk	Yes
Bethel	Atmautluak	Yes	North Slope Borough	Nuiqsut	Yes
Bethel	Chefornak	Yes	North Slope Borough	Anaktuvuk Pass	Yes
Bethel	Chevak	Yes	North Slope Borough	Kaktovik	Yes
Bethel	Chuathbaluk	Yes	Norton Sound	Diomedede	Yes
Bethel	Eek	Yes	Norton Sound	Gambell	Yes
Bethel	Emmonak	Yes	Norton Sound	Shaktolik	Yes
Bethel	Grayling	Yes	Norton Sound	Shishmaref	Yes
Bethel	Hooper Bay	Yes	Norton Sound	Unalakleet	Yes
Bethel	Kasigluk	Yes	Norton Sound	Golovin	Yes
Bethel	Kongiganak	Yes	Norton Sound	Wales	Yes
Bethel	Kotlik	Yes	Norton Sound	Savoonga	Yes
Bethel	Kwethluk	Yes	Norton Sound	White Mountain	Yes
Bethel	U&L Kalskag	Yes	Norton Sound	Koyuk	Yes
Bethel	Mtn. Village	Yes	Norton Sound	Elim	Yes
Bethel	Napakiak	Yes	Norton Sound	St. Michael	Yes
Bethel	Napaskiak	Yes	Norton Sound	Teller	Yes
Bethel	Newtok	Yes	Norton Sound	Brevig Mission	No
Bethel	Nightmute	Yes	Norton Sound	Stebbins	No
Bethel	Nunapitchuk	Yes	Fairbanks	Nulato	Yes
Bethel	Nunam Iqua	Yes	Fairbanks	Huslia	Yes
Bethel	Quinhagak	Yes	Fairbanks	Galena	Yes
Bethel	Pilot Station	Yes	Fairbanks	Ft. Yukon	Yes
Bethel	Russian Mission	Yes	Fairbanks	Chalkyitsik	Yes
Bethel	Scammon Bay	Yes	Fairbanks	Arctic Village	Yes
Bethel	Sleetmute	Yes	Fairbanks	Venetie	Yes
Bethel	Stony River	Yes	Fairbanks	Allakaket	Yes
Bethel	Toksook	Yes	Fairbanks	Minto	Yes
Bethel	Tuluksak	Yes	Fairbanks	Stevens Village	Yes
Bethel	Tuntutuliak	Yes			
Bethel	Tununak	Yes			

Frequently asked questions:

1. If a member is approved for Medicaid travel and, while away from their home community, meets CDC guidelines and state mandates for self-isolation, will Medicaid reimburse for the additional lodging and meals?
 - Yes, if the self-isolation is recommended by a medical professional, and for only the length of time that is medically necessary.
2. If a member is currently in travel status and medical services have concluded, but the member's community of residence has subsequently implemented a travel ban, will Medicaid pay for lodging and meals until the travel ban is lifted?
 - If a travel ban prohibits a member from returning to their home community by any means of transport, forward the travel request to DHCS for review.
3. If a member has been tested for COVID-19 while away from their home community, will Medicaid reimburse for lodging/meals until the results come back?
 - Yes, Medicaid will cover lodging and meals until the member's results come back.
4. Prior Authorization teams must immediately notify DHCS for all members who are in travel status and need testing for COVID-19 or need quarantine or self-isolation.
5. Hospitals and doctors' offices are restricting escorts from entering the facility with a patient. Will Medicaid authorize extra taxi units for the escort to return to the hotel and then back to pick up the member?
 - Medicaid will approve extra taxi units for the escort to leave the premises and return to pick up the member if
 - The wait will exceed 3 hours, or
 - The facility will not allow escorts to wait inside for the member