

Medical Assistance for Children in PA

EPSDT



Imagine *Different* ... Achieve *Different* Coalition

We believe all children should grow up in families, and with the right supports, this can happen for all children with disabilities.

www.imaginedifferent.org

What is Medical Assistance?

Medical Assistance (MA) is another name for Medicaid, a federal health care program for people who have low income or have disabilities.

Participating states administer their own MA programs but must follow federal rules.

One such rule: For all MA-enrolled children under the age of 21, the state **MUST** cover **ALL** services in the federal MA benefit package.

Eligibility in Pennsylvania

Currently in PA, all children with significant disabilities are eligible for MA without regard to their parents' income.

As a result, virtually all such children are eligible.

Child Benefit Package

EPSDT

The MA child benefit package is called EPSDT – “Early, Periodic, Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment” services

It includes virtually all **medical services** to the full extent necessary to treat an illness, condition or disability.

Most, but not all, disability services are considered “medical”.

Examples of EPSDT Services

- Hospital and laboratory services
- Medication
- Services of any MA-enrolled, state-licensed health practitioner, e.g., Physicians, Therapists (MH, PT, OT, Speech....) ...
- Hearing Aids and eyeglasses
- Medical equipment and supplies, including stair glides and wheelchair lifts
- Intensive Behavioral Health Services (IBHS)
 - 1/1 behavioral services at home, in school or in the community, including Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA);

AND



Home Health Coverage

Shift nursing, home health aide or personal care services - **for as many hours as deemed medically necessary.**

PA only considers these home health services to be medically necessary when parents are unable (e.g., due to physical or mental limitations) or unavailable to provide the care.

Unavailable means – **they are working, sleeping, or fulfilling other responsibilities** (e.g., food shopping, medical appointments, their other children's needs, religious services....)

At all other times, nurse or aide services are considered to be medically unnecessary respite care and are NOT covered by EPSDT.

Non-Covered Services

Services **NOT** covered under EPSDT are few but include:

- Purely educational/vocational services, (e.g., tutoring, job coach)
- Home and vehicle modifications (e.g., widened doorways, accessible bathrooms, decks for wheelchair lifts to land on)
- Respite – nurses/aides when parents are available but need a vacation or break
- Room and board outside of congregate settings
- LifeSharing – a voluntary alternate or partner family arrangement

A pair of black-rimmed glasses is resting on an open book. The book has a red bookmark. The background is blurred, showing more books and a wooden surface.

How To Enroll Your Child

Apply at your local County Assistance Office or online at <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/compass.web/Public/CMPHome>

Provide documents supporting your child's disability. Answer income questions even though they will not count them.

For more, see: Getting MA for a Child with a Disability <https://www.phlp.org/uploads/attachments/ck70i90ve0007x8u8d07hx2ok-ph-95-guide-update-april-2019.pdf>

HealthChoices – Physical Health

Most children on MA are required to choose a physical health managed care plan (MCO) or will be assigned to one. A few children may remain in DHS's fee-for-service (no MCO) MA program.

Pick an MCO that is accepted by your child's most necessary healthcare providers.

Special Needs Units

Every physical health MCO has a Special Needs Unit (SNU) to assist with issues related to, among others, children with disabilities.

Children with disabilities can have caseworkers assigned to help access the services of the MCO and to assist with obtaining outside resources.

Service Requests



Many physical health services require prior authorization from the MCO.

In addition to a prescription, many require a treating professional to write a letter to the MCO explaining why the service or item is medically necessary.

Healthcare providers generally know how to submit these requests, but you can always call the MCO SNU for help.

Provider Networks

Generally, children must use providers in their physical MCOs' networks.

MCOs must use MA-enrolled out-of-network providers when they do not have in-network providers available.

HealthChoices - Behavioral Health

Children on MA are automatically enrolled in their county's single behavioral health managed care plan.

Most behavioral health services can be accessed by going directly to a participating provider or by contacting the behavioral health MCO for assistance.

Behavioral Health Service Examples

- Psychiatrists
- Psychologists and other therapists
- Behavioral aides in the home, school or community
- Applied Behavior Analysts
- Medication (paid by physical health MCO)
- Psychiatric Hospitals
- Residential Treatment
- Host-home placements

Appeals

MCOs must explain any denial of a doctor's request in writing and you can appeal to the MCO and/or the state.

- The MCO cannot terminate or reduce a child's current services pending the outcome of an appeal **if the appeal request is filed within 10 days.**
- The 10-day deadline can be met by notice that you intend to appeal – you do not have to make your arguments within that time.
- There are several levels of appeal and the 10-day rule applies at each level.



Assistance

For assistance with appeals disputing medical necessity, contact the Pennsylvania Health Law Project (800-274-3258) or your local Legal Services Office.

Assistance with coverage or policy issues should be brought to their attention and/or Disability Rights Pennsylvania (800-692-7443)