



MEDICAL-LEGAL PARTNERSHIP

March 31, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

In today's MLP COVID-19 update, we will focus on the latest orders from the governor and applicable state agencies and we will provide some additional resources for pediatric and family medicine providers as you continue to work through this ever-challenging and critical time. Specifically, below you will find important information on changes in child care settings and fees, the latest on the state's Medicaid Waiver, changes in DSS policy for HUSKY and other public benefits, and a brief word on the CARES Act and the forthcoming stimulus checks.

- **CHILD CARE SETTINGS**

- **Limitations on Groups to No More than 10**

Per the Governor's latest [Order \(7Q\)](#), "all child care facilities shall limit group sizes to no more than ten children in one space ..." In addition, facilities which operate a setting where 30 or more children are cared for in one setting must seek approval from the [Commissioner of Early Childhood](#). The order applies to *all* childcare facilities, including those that are exempt from licensing requirements. The complete list of excluded programs, which include childcare services offered by public schools systems and municipalities (and which is quite exhaustive) may be found in the Connecticut General Statutes [here](#).

- **Cost Participation Fees Waived for April**

Per the [Governor's Order 7Q](#), family cost participation fees starting with those due for March services that *have not yet been billed* are waived, as are new suspensions of services relating to non-payment of fees. Early Childhood Commissioner Bye's memo may be found [here](#).

- **PUBLIC BENEFITS – MEDICAID/FOOD STAMPS**

- **CMS Approves Connecticut's Medicaid Waiver Application**

The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) partially approved the state Department of Social Services' (DSS) massive waiver request. In a nutshell, the [waiver](#) gives DSS authority to *waive prior authorization requirements, temporarily suspends provider enrollment revalidation, enables care in alternative settings, such as shelters*

and in vehicles, and modifies certain fair hearing requirements. Of particular interest to providers – CMS will allow DSS to temporarily suspend Medicaid prior authorization requests and extend pre-existing authorizations for which a beneficiary has previously received prior-authorization through the end of the emergency. If you or your colleagues have a question about this waiver or would like additional information about the waiver’s statement on fair hearing modifications or provider enrollment provisions, please don’t hesitate to [contact us](#) at your convenience.

- **Food Stamp (SNAP) Requirement Changes**

DSS has suspended work requirements and certain time limits for enrollees during the pendency of the emergency. In addition, if the SNAP re-enrollment form was due in March, those benefits will automatically be continued through September 30, 2020. If the form is due in April – benefits will automatically be continued through October 31, 2020 and for May’s form, through November 30.

- **Extension of HUSKY Benefits for Three Months**

DSS has automatically extended HUSKY benefits for those whose eligibility is scheduled to end in March or April *by three months*. Thus, if benefits are scheduled to end today (March 31) those benefits will be extended through June 30, 2020 (and July 31 for those benefits scheduled to end on April 30).

For a full listing of DSS information regarding its COVID-19 policy changes, please go [here](#).

- **The CARES ACT – What Does It Mean for Families**

The CARES Act – the \$2 trillion relief package passed by Congress on March 27 and signed into law by the president later that day, creates direct payments to families and expands unemployment benefits to those who are most vulnerable and at-risk in your practices. Those who wish to further explore the entire 880 page act may do so [here](#), but here are a few highlights from the package:

- Singles adults who report an adjusted gross income of \$75,000 or less on their 2019 tax return will receive a one-time check for \$1,200, while married couples who files jointly are eligible for \$2,400, with an additional \$500 for every “qualifying child” under 16 (with increasing income limits).
- *Please note that* most households with income under \$25,000 *do not file tax returns*, but from all of the analyses of the bill we have reviewed, it appears that households who have not filed 2019 returns **should do so as soon as possible**. The best way to ensure that your patients or their families receive a recovery rebate is to file a 2019 tax return, which can be accomplished for

free online from home using the IRS Free file program (<https://www.irs.gov/filing/free-file-do-your-federal-taxes-for-free>). The bill also instructs the IRS to engage in a public campaign to alert all individuals of their eligibility for the rebate and how to receive it if they have not filed either a 2019 or 2018 tax return.

- **Unemployment**

The CARES Act provides expanded eligibility for those in Connecticut who are not working because they have been laid off, are working part-time, are self-employed, an independent contractor, or were working in the “gig economy.” Between now and July 31, an additional \$600 will be added to every unemployment compensation check, so no one will receive less than \$600 per week. Individuals can apply for unemployment insurance [here](#). Individuals who exhaust the weeks of unemployment compensation available through the Connecticut Department of Labor will be eligible for an additional 13 weeks of benefits.

The *New York Times* has an excellent Q&A regarding the CARES act in today’s on-line edition, which may be found [here](#).

Finally – please note that as the number of coronavirus cases continues to rise, we will continue to be a resource for all of your questions and concerns regarding the systems which connect, assist and provide for our most vulnerable children and youth, including the state’s Medicaid program, DCF, juvenile justice and educational systems. While we may not have the answers in this ever-changing landscape, we will work to assist you in your advocacy efforts and work with you every step of the way. For more system wide resources and information, please visit the [Center for Children’s Advocacy’s COVID-19 page](#).

Thanks again for your feedback and for your support of our work as well.

Sincerely,

The MLP Team

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