Special Bulletin

For professional providers

November 3, 2023

Reminder: 24/7 Availability Requirements for Highmark Credentialed Practitioners

Highmark requires that all credentialed network practitioners be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week (24/7) to provide coverage for members. These 24/7 availability requirements can be accomplished either directly or through an on-call arrangement with another Highmark credentialed participating practitioner in the same network(s) and of the same or similar specialty. 24/7 coverage includes providing such care services as triage, appropriate treatment, and/or referrals for treatment.

Availability Options

An answering service, pager, or direct telephone access whereby practitioners or their designees can be contacted is acceptable.

Behavioral Health

For behavioral health providers, a referral to a crisis line/center is acceptable if a prior arrangement has been made whereby the crisis line/center can reach the provider (or his/her designee), if needed.

The following specialties are exempt from the 24/7 requirement:

- Audiologists
- Certified diabetic educators (CDE)
- Dermatopathologists
- Dietitians/nutritionists
- Massage therapists
- Occupational therapists
- Pathologists (only if working outside of the acute care setting)
- Oral and maxillofacial pathologists (only if working outside of the acute care setting)
- Physical therapists
- Preventive medicine specialists

- Read-only practitioners and psychologists (who perform neuropsychological testing or psychological evaluations only)
- · Speech/language pathologists

For more information, see the following sections in the Highmark Provider Manual:

- Chapter 1, Unit 4: Highmark Member Information > 1.4 Member Access To Physicians and Facilities > Accessibility Expectations for Providers.
- Chapter 4, Unit 1: PCPs and Specialists > 4.1 PCP and Medical Specialist Accessibility Expectations > Accessibility Expectations for Providers.
- Chapter 4, Unit 2: Behavioral Health Providers > 4.2 Accessibility Expectations for Behavioral Health > Accessibility Expectations.

This information is issued on behalf of Highmark Blue Shield and its affiliated Blue companies, which are independent licensees of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association. Highmark Inc. d/b/a Highmark Blue Shield and certain of its affiliated Blue companies serve Blue Shield members in 21 counties in central Pennsylvania and 13 counties in northeastern New York. As a partner in joint operating agreements, Highmark Blue Shield also provides services in conjunction with a separate health plan in southeastern Pennsylvania. Highmark Inc. or certain of its affiliated Blue companies also serve Blue Cross Blue Shield members in 29 counties in western Pennsylvania, 13 counties in northeastern Pennsylvania, the state of West Virginia plus Washington County, Ohio, the state of Delaware, and 8 counties in western New York. All references to Highmark Inc. d/b/a Highmark Blue Shield and/or to one or more of its affiliated Blue companies.

