

Provider Alert

UPDATE: How to Increase COVID-19 Vaccination Acceptance Rates

July 21, 2021

Target Audience: All Behavioral Health Providers

Thank you for your efforts to encourage those you serve to get a life-saving COVID-19 vaccine.

COVID-19 vaccination rates among Marylanders with behavioral health diagnoses are improving, but they continue to lag behind the general Maryland population.

Those who are not vaccinated against COVID-19 are at greater risk for infection, hospitalization, and death. They are also at risk of contracting the Alpha, Delta, Lambda, and other emerging variants.

Please continue to encourage those in your care and your staff to get vaccinated as soon as possible. To make it even more accessible, consider hosting a vaccine clinic, where the vaccine and vaccinators simply come to you on-site. Another option is to become a vaccinator yourself through ImmuNet if you have nursing staff, especially for those who have previously provided the flu vaccine.

1. Hosting COVID-19 Vaccine Clinics On-Site with a Pharmacy or Mobile Clinic Partner, including for Residential and Congregate Living Facilities:

You can request a GoVAX Mobile clinic at governor.maryland.gov/govaxmobile or by calling 1-855-MD-GoVAX (1-855-634-6829).

2. Become a Vaccinator through ImmuNet:

To register to become a COVID-19 vaccine provider, use the ImmuNet Quick Reference Guides at:

https://phpa.health.maryland.gov/OIDEOR/IMMUN/Pages/quick_ref_guides.asp.

Email questions about the program to mdh.mdimmunet@maryland.gov or call 410-767-6606 Monday-Friday 8 am to 5 pm. Families and staff are also eligible for vaccination.

Providers can also submit claims for COVID-19 vaccine administration. While the federal government provides the vaccine itself for free, providers can submit claims for their administration of COVID-19 vaccines.

Providers who are paneled with a Managed Care Organization (MCO) must bill the patient's MCO for vaccine administration, or, if not paneled with an MCO, medical practitioners would bill through eMedicaid for Medicaid recipients. However, in Maryland, behavioral health providers are "carved out" and directed to bill the ASO. This alert pertains to these providers who bill through the ASO, Optum, Maryland.

COVID-19 vaccines should be administered as soon as providers become eligible and receive supplies. Depending on the provider type listed below, claims may be submitted immediately or may need to be held until setup is complete.

No authorization is required. All claims for administration of the vaccine should be submitted using only one ICD-10-CM code: Z23, Encounter for immunization, with any place of service (POS). The service will only be billable on the CMS 1500 or 837P. Claims will be payable under both Medicaid and Uninsured.

Presently, the following Behavioral Health Providers with the following category of services can be paid - PT 15, 24, 27, 32, 50, 54, CC, 94, MT, and MC. Providers will be alerted when Provider Type PR has been added to the eligible provider types.

- Further information regarding billing and reimbursement for administration of the vaccine can be found in a Maryland Department of Health transmittal, [here](#)
- Requirements for administration of the vaccine are detailed [here](#)
- The COVID-19 Vaccine and Infusion Code Fee Schedule is posted [here](#)

Additional Information:

- To find a vaccination clinic at a hospital, local health department, or pharmacy, go to coronavirus.maryland.gov/pages/vaccine#locator, or contact primary care providers.

- Vaccine hesitancy continues to impede our efforts to protect ourselves, our families, friends, loved ones, and our communities. BHA has provided three webinars on this topic, to help providers encourage individuals to get vaccinated:
 1. [Addressing Vaccine Hesitancy](#)
 2. [Strategies for Providers to Increase Vaccine Uptake](#)
 3. [Updates on the Vaccines and Vaccine Hesitancy](#)
- In the course of their interactions with clients, all clinical staff should discuss their vaccination status, encourage vaccination, and provide information on how to be vaccinated. When this intervention is done by a psychiatrist or nurse practitioner as part of a medication management visit, this may increase the complexity of the visit. For example, the prescriber may be able to bill a 99213 code (Evaluation and Management, including prescription - Low Complexity) instead of a 99212 code (Evaluation and Management, including prescription - Straight Forward).

If you have questions about the information contained in this alert, please contact Steve Whitefield at steven.whitefield@maryland.gov.

Thank you,

Optum Maryland Team

Visit our website at maryland.optum.com for provider resources, online training, and more information.