


## Special COVID-19 Letter of Direction #17

**Date:** November 9, 2020

**To:** Centennial Care 2.0 Managed Care Organizations

**From:** Nicole Comeaux, Director, Medical Assistance Division 

**Subject:** COVID-19 Guidance: Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) for Testing, Treatment and Isolation

**Title:** COVID-19 Guidance: NEMT and State Isolation Sites

The purpose of this Letter of Direction (LOD) is to provide guidance and directives to the Centennial Care 2.0 Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) for modification of services and program standards related to the national public health emergency associated with the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. The purpose of these changes is to assure the continuation of essential services to Medicaid patients without disruption or delay while following Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) direction to maximize social distancing for the duration of the public health emergency.

To slow the spread of COVID-19, the State Emergency Operations Center (EOC) established non-congregate shelter isolation sites. These Alternative Care Sites provide isolation housing to COVID-impacted individuals. The NM Department of Health (DOH) has established the admission criteria for the sites and provides medical oversight at the shelters to ensure individuals are medically safe and able to remain in the shelters. Through this LOD, designated COVID-19 testing sites and non-congregate shelter sites shall be accepted as the originating or destination point for an otherwise qualifying Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) service.

The intent of this LOD is to ensure there is safe and non-emergent transportation:

- To and from a Medicaid eligible member's home, domicile or temporary residence to COVID-19 testing sites for Medicaid members in need of COVID-19 testing;
- To a nursing or intermediate care facility post discharge from a COVID-19 related hospitalization;
- To the Medicaid eligible member's home, domicile or temporary residence post discharge from a nursing or intermediate care facility;

- To a non-congregate isolation shelter site when a Medicaid eligible member has been accepted for shelter placement; or
- To the Medicaid eligible member's home, domicile or temporary residence post discharge from a non-congregate shelter site.

Individuals admitted to a non-congregate shelter site who develop symptoms that require a higher level of care will be discharged from the non-congregate shelter site and transferred to a facility that can better meet their medical needs. The MCO will be responsible for transporting the member from the non-congregate shelter site to the new facility via the emergency or NEMT transportation services that best addresses the member's safe transport.

MCOs must ensure implementation of proactive identification strategies and transportation processes for Medicaid eligible recipients who are seeking COVID-19 testing, treatment, or isolation. The MCOs shall:

- a) Require NEMT vendors to treat transportation as urgent and schedule as soon as possible;
- b) Provide transportation to a qualifying passenger who identifies as seeking COVID-19 testing or treatment and be in stable condition;
  - i) Passengers should be evaluated for their need of emergency transportation. See CDC Symptoms of Coronavirus page <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>
  - ii) This qualification includes but is not limited to the passenger's ability to walk without support and/or not experiencing respiratory distress.
- c) Suspend prior approvals for Medicaid eligible recipients seeking COVID-19 testing and/or treatment and cease physician verification requirements;
- d) Collaborate with transportation providers for the exchange of site testing processes or practices for the purposes of efficient delivery of services. Please see NM Department of Health COVID-19 Screening & Testing Sites directory at <https://cvprovider.nmhealth.org/directory.html>
- e) Collaborate with hospital discharge planners and nursing facility staff to ensure transportation to a nursing facility or intermediate care facility is provided upon hospital discharge; and
- f) Collaborate with the State EOC Shelter and non-congregate shelter staff to ensure transportation to shelter sites is arranged when isolation is needed. The MCO will also need to ensure that transportation from the shelter site to the Medicaid eligible member's home, domicile, or temporary residence is arranged when the Medicaid eligible recipient has been cleared for discharge from the non-congregate shelter.

This Special COVID-19 Letter of Direction is effective immediately. The LOD will sunset as directed by the Human Services Department (HSD) or when HSD determines that the outbreak of the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) associated with the national public health emergency has been contained.