Medicaid Glossary:
COVID-19 Terms to Know

COVID-19 has impacted our daily lives with a new set of terms, many of which we are not accustomed to using — or are learning to use in new ways. Below are some of the more prominent COVID-19 words and phrases, along with context for how these terms are defined within Medicaid.

Appropriations

Appropriations are the allocation of funds by both the federal government and states to fund programs and services. For government-funded programs like Medicaid and Medicare, appropriations are used to fund the administration of these programs, the services provided by both, research, and more.[1]

Blanket Waiver

Authorized under section 1135 of the Social Security Act, blanket waivers are issued at the federal level by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. A blanket waiver is an immediate-action response to the needs of the health care system, typically in response to a declaration of a public health emergency or natural disaster. Blanket waivers affect Medicaid, Medicare, and CHIP providers and care delivery without the need for additional approvals.[2]

Contact Tracing

When a patient is confirmed to be infected with a communicable disease, contact tracing is used to determine who, if anyone, the infected patient has come into contact with that could be, or is currently, infected with the same disease. Contact tracing allows for more accurate disease tracking and potentially limits widespread transmission.[3]

Epidemic

An epidemic is typically a sudden rise in communicable disease infection rates within a specific area, community, or population on a scale far beyond the expected infection rates within that respective population.[4]

Medical Respite

Medical respite care programs are short-term residential care services provided to individuals experiencing homelessness, allowing them to safely recover from a health incident. Typically, medical respite care programs are provided within housing, shelters, or nursing homes for individuals who will find it difficult to recover from their illness on the streets, but do not find themselves in a dire enough situation to warrant a hospital stay. Given COVID-19, additional locations such as hotels and motels are being considered and utilized to deliver this service.[5]

Pandemic

A pandemic is a series of epidemics that cross nations or entire continents, infecting people on a much larger scale.[6]

Public Health Emergency (PHE)

Although precise definitions may vary depending on the public organization, a public health emergency (PHE) is a scenario where the health of a community or otherwise large group of people is put into jeopardy. PHEs are often considered global pandemics, outbreaks, or bioterrorism attacks, but natural disasters such as wildfires, hurricanes, and earthquakes can also create PHEs.[7]

Quarantine

A quarantine is an action used to keep individuals potentially exposed to a transmittable disease away from other people, even if the individual in question is asymptomatic. Under quarantine, a person's travel outside of their home is limited in an effort to prevent the transmission of the disease.[8]

Redetermination

Under Medicaid, the redetermination process is a confirmation of household income or disability to determine future Medicaid eligibility of current Medicaid members. Typically, Medicaid members are required to follow the redetermination process annually, though the interval can change depending on the Medicaid agency's policies.[9]

Revalidation

Revalidation is a process all Medicaid-approved providers must follow at regularly determined intervals. A provider must reapply, or revalidate, their Medicaid enrollment to continue to deliver care to Medicaid members. The revalidation process ensures providers continue to adhere to care delivery standards as determined by their respective state's Medicaid plan.[10]

Telehealth

In terms of Medicaid, telehealth provides members with an at-home alternative to health office visitations. Telehealth appointments provide health care services and supports via a remote, online, or telephone conversation between a member and a health professional. These appointments ensure a patient is receiving any needed care while the pandemic limits access to medical care face to face. Telehealth is also used to support communication between providers for consultation on the health care needs of members. [11]

Read the Full Glossary

These COVID-19-related terms are a small selection of terms available in the UnitedHealthcare Community & State Medicaid Glossary. Read more at uhccs.com/Medicaid-glossary

Sources

[1] https://nhchc.org/policy-issues/appropriations/
[2] https://www.cms.gov/files/document/summary-covid-19-emergency-declaration-waivers.pdf
[3] https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-policy-watch/is-contact-tracing-getting-enough-attention-in-u-s-coronavirus-response/
[4] https://www.cdc.gov/csels/dsepd/ss1978/lesson1/section11.html
[5] https://nhchc.org/clinical-practice/medical-respite-care/
[6] https://www.cdc.gov/csels/dsepd/ss1978/lesson1/section11.html
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[10] https://www.medicaid.gov/sites/default/files/2019-12/revalidation-2016-001.pdf
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