

## Reminder: appointment access and after-hours availability requirements

**Background:** To ensure members receive care in a timely manner, PCPs, specialty providers and Georgia Families 360°<sub>SM</sub> providers must maintain the following appointment access requirements.

**PCPs must adhere to the following access guidelines:**

Service	Access requirement
Emergent or emergency visits	Immediately upon presentation — 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and without preauthorization
Urgent, nonemergency visits	Not to exceed 24 clock hours
PCP routine visits	Not to exceed 14 calendar days
PCP adult sick visit	Not to exceed 24 clock hours
PCP pediatric sick visit	Not to exceed 24 clock hours
Visits for children eligible for Health Check	Within 90 calendar days of enrollment

**Specialists must adhere to the following access guidelines:**

Service	Access requirement
Maternity care for pregnant women — initial visit	Within 14 calendar days
Maternity care for pregnant women — second trimester	Not to exceed 7 calendar days
Maternity care for pregnant women — third trimester	Not to exceed 3 business days
Mental health providers (routine)	Not to exceed 14 calendar days
Mental health providers (follow-up)	Not to exceed 30 calendar days
Therapy (physical, occupational, speech, aquatic)	Not to exceed 30 calendar days
Emergent or emergency visits	Immediately upon presentation — 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and without preauthorization
Urgent, nonemergency visits	Not to exceed 24 hours
Nonemergency hospital stays (elective)	Not to exceed 30 calendar days

**Georgia Families 360° service providers must adhere to the following access guidelines:**

Service	Access requirement
Dental screening	Within 10 days of enrollment
EPSDT (new enrollee)	Within 10 days of enrollment
EPSDT (transitioned enrollee)	Within 30 days
Trauma assessment (new enrollee)	Within 15 days of enrollment
Physical exam (exiting enrollee)	Within 10 days

Children younger than 3 years of age suspected of having a developmental delay or disability should be referred to the designated Babies Can't Wait or Children First program for assessment and evaluation.

The information in this update may be an update or change to your provider manual. Find the most current manual at:

<https://providers.amerigroup.com>

Providers may not use discriminatory practices (such as preference to other insured or private-pay patients, separate waiting rooms, or appointment days).

**Appointment wait times:**

Scheduled appointments (adults and pediatric members)	Waiting times shall not exceed 60 minutes. After 30 minutes, you must give member an update on waiting time with an option of continuing to wait or rescheduling the appointment.
Work-in or walk-in appointments (adult and pediatric members)	Waiting time shall not exceed 90 minutes. After 45 minutes, you must give member an update on waiting time with an option of continuing to wait or rescheduling the appointment.

**Providers are to track waiting times by appointment to be reviewed by the Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH) upon request.**

**After-hours availability requirements:**

To ensure continuous 24-hour coverage, a PCP must maintain one of the following arrangements for members to contact the PCP after normal business hours:

- The office telephone is answered after office hours by an answering service that can contact the PCP or another designated network medical practitioner.
  - In urgent situations, calls are to be answered by an answering service and must be returned within 20 minutes after contact is made.
  - In nonurgent situations, calls are to be answered by an answering service and must be returned within one hour after contact is made.
- The office telephone is answered after normal business hours by a recording that directs members to call another number to reach either the PCP or another provider designated by the PCP. A live person must be available to answer the designated provider’s telephone; a second recording is not acceptable. Recorded messages must be in the language of each of the major population groups the PCP serves. The DCH has currently designated English and Spanish as prominent languages for major population groups served by the Georgia Families and PeachCare for Kids® programs.
- The office telephone is transferred after office hours to another location where a live person answers and is able to contact the PCP or a designated Amerigroup Community Care network medical practitioner who can return the call within 20 minutes.

The following after-hours answering procedures are not acceptable:

- The office telephone is only answered during office hours.
- The office telephone is answered after office hours by a recording that tells members to leave a message.
- The office telephone is answered after office hours by a recording that directs members to go to the ER for any services needed.
- Urgent after-hours calls are returned more than 20 minutes after contact.
- Nonurgent after-hours calls are returned more than one hour after contact.

**What if I need assistance?**

If you have questions about this communication, received this fax in error or need assistance with any other item, contact your local Provider Relations representative or call Provider Services toll free at 1-800-454-3730.