

# Provider Update

## Appointment availability and after-hours access requirements

**Summary:** To ensure members receive care in a timely manner, PCPs, specialty providers and behavioral health providers must maintain the following appointment availability and after-hours access standards.

### Appointment availability requirements:

Appointment type	Appointment standard
Emergent or emergency visits	Immediately upon presentation — 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and without preauthorization
PCP urgent visits	Within 24 hours
PCP routine visits	Not to exceed 4-6 weeks from the date of a patient's request for a routine visit
Persistent symptoms	Within 48 hours
Specialist urgent visit	Within 24 hours
Specialist routine visit	Within 30 calendar days
Behavioral health — urgent, nonemergency	Within one hour of presentation at a service delivery site or within 24 hours of telephone contact with provider or the contractor
Behavioral health — emergency	Within 15 minutes of arrival
Behavioral health — persistent symptoms	Within 48 hours of reposting symptoms
Behavioral health — routine	Within three weeks of requesting appointment
Maternity care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• For first trimester — within 14 days</li><li>• For third trimester — within five business days or immediately if an emergency</li><li>• High-risk pregnancies — within 14 business days of request or immediately if an emergency</li><li>• Postpartum exam — between 3-8 weeks after delivery</li></ul>

### After-hours access requirements:

Amerigroup Iowa, Inc. policy and Iowa state requirements necessitate that our members have access to quality health care services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This kind of access means PCPs must have a system in place to ensure members may call after-hours with medical questions or concerns. Amerigroup monitors PCP compliance with after-hours access standards on a regular basis. Failure to comply may result in corrective action.

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/ia>

PCPs must adhere to the answering service and answering machine protocols defined in the following sections. Answering service or after-hours personnel must:

- Forward member calls directly to the PCP or an on-call provider or instruct the member that the provider will contact the member within 30 minutes.
- Ask the member if the call is an emergency. In the event of an emergency, immediately direct the member to dial 911 or proceed to the ER.
- Have the ability to contact a telephone interpreter for members with language barriers.
- Return all calls.

It is not acceptable answering procedure to:

- Answer the office telephone only during office hours.
- Answer the office telephone after hours by a recording that tells members to leave a message.
- Answer the office telephone after hours with recording that directs members to go to an ER for any needed service.
- Return after-hours calls outside of 30 minutes.

**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 at 1-800-454-3730.