

Bulletin 20-02

To: Health Insurance Issuers  
From: Larry Deiter, Director  
Date: March 25, 2020  
Re: COVID-19 and Health Benefit Plans

Due to the extraordinary circumstances affecting South Dakotans under threat of COVID-19, the South Dakota Division of Insurance requests health carriers providing coverage through health benefits plans take the following measures through June 30, 2020:

- 1. Testing for COVID-19.** In conjunction with H.R. 6201, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, all health carriers must cover COVID-19 testing and the associated office visit, urgent care, or emergency room charge at no cost to insureds.
- 2. Medical Management.** Preauthorization requirement for COVID-19 testing or treatment should be waived or expedited. Further, health carriers should be prepared to expedite utilization review and appeal processes for services related to COVID-19.
- 3. Telehealth.** Health carriers are strongly encouraged to take necessary steps to expand the availability of telemedicine services in all areas of care for their insureds by eliminating barriers to its use. Carriers are also encouraged to waive cost sharing (copayment, coinsurance, deductibles) for telehealth services.
- 4. Pharmacy.** Health carriers are urged to allow early refills on maintenance prescription medication, without additional authorization requirements, where appropriate.
- 5. Network Adequacy.** As health care needs increase, it is recommended carriers allow access to out-of-network providers at in-network cost sharing if there is not an adequate number of in-network providers.
- 6. Premiums.** The Division urges health carriers to make reasonable accommodation for premium payments prior to cancellation and refrain from cancelling coverage for individuals that have been diagnosed with COVID-19. Carriers may elect to extend premium grace periods.
- 7. Balance Billing.** As the COVID-19 pandemic affects every sector, the Division urges health care providers to assist in consumer challenges by refraining from balance billing out-of-network insureds and to expand acceptance of insurance coverage by joining additional networks.

The Division appreciates the work insurance carriers and health care providers are accomplishing in this rapidly changing environment, including taking care of their employees while adjusting to the needs and demands of the South Dakota health insurance market.