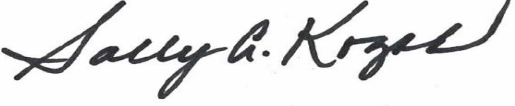


ISSUE DATE March 31, 2022	EFFECTIVE DATE April 1, 2022	NUMBER 99-22-01
SUBJECT Extension of Postpartum Coverage from 60 days to 12 Months		BY  Sally A. Kozak, Deputy Secretary Office of Medical Assistance Programs

IMPORTANT REMINDER: All providers must revalidate the Medical Assistance (MA) enrollment of each service location every 5 years. Providers should log into PROMISe to check the revalidation dates of each service location and submit revalidation applications at least 60 days prior to the revalidation dates. Enrollment (revalidation) applications may be found at: <https://www.dhs.pa.gov/providers/Providers/Pages/PROMISe-Enrollment.aspx>.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this bulletin is to advise providers that the Medical Assistance (MA) Program is extending postpartum coverage from 60 days to 12 months, beginning April 1, 2022.

SCOPE:

This bulletin applies to all providers enrolled in the MA Program.

BACKGROUND:

The MA Program provides comprehensive maternity care for eligible pregnant beneficiaries. Pregnant MA beneficiaries may receive these services through the Department of Human Services' Healthy Beginnings Plus Program or through a maternity care program provided by MA managed care organizations. Pregnant beneficiaries are also eligible to receive other MA covered services. In accordance with current Medicaid law, the MA Program provides coverage to pregnant women through the last day of the month in which the 60th day falls after the pregnancy ends.

According to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the United States' rate of maternal mortality is rising with a growing body of evidence showing that many deaths are preventable and occur after pregnancy-related Medicaid coverage ends. Similar findings were also found by the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) in its December

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS BULLETIN SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO:

The appropriate toll-free number for your provider type.

Visit the Office of Medical Assistance Programs website at:

<https://www.dhs.pa.gov/providers/Providers/Pages/Health%20Care%20for%20Providers/Contact-Information-for-Providers.aspx>.

2020 report titled, “Pregnancy-Associated Deaths in Pennsylvania, 2013-2018”, available at: <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/Documents/Diseases%20and%20Conditions/Pregnancy%20Associated%20Deaths%202013-2018%20FINAL.pdf>. The DOH report found 58% of pregnancy-associated deaths occur between 43-365 days postpartum. The DOH report also found Medicaid paid for a third of the births in Pennsylvania but accounts for half of all pregnancy-associated deaths. Further, the DOH report found racial/ethnic disparities among pregnancy-associated deaths with Non-Hispanic Blacks accounting for 23% of pregnancy-associated deaths while only accounting for 14% of the births.

DISCUSSION:

On March 11, 2021, the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) (Pub. L. 117-2) was signed into law giving state Medicaid programs the option under section 9812 of ARPA to extend the postpartum eligibility period from 60 days to 12 months. This provision allows states to provide 12 months of continuous Medicaid coverage to beneficiaries through the last day of the month in which the 12-month postpartum period ends, regardless of changes in circumstances that may affect eligibility, such as a change in income, household composition, or categorical eligibility. The option to extend postpartum eligibility under ARPA is available to state Medicaid programs beginning April 1, 2022.

On August 5, 2021, the Wolf Administration announced that the MA Program would extend Pennsylvania’s Medicaid postpartum coverage period to 12 months.

Extending MA postpartum eligibility coverage will help beneficiaries maintain relationships with care providers, reduce pregnancy-associated deaths and racial disparities for pregnancy-associated deaths, improve maternal-child health outcomes and improve the health and wellbeing of pregnant beneficiaries as well as postpartum mothers and their children.

PROCEDURE:

Beginning April 1, 2022, the MA Program will extend postpartum coverage from 60 days to 12 months. The 12-month postpartum period begins when pregnancy ends and will extend through the last day of the 12th month in which the postpartum period ends. The extended postpartum coverage is for MA beneficiaries who are currently pregnant or who are no longer pregnant but are within their 12-month postpartum period.

All MA services provided to pregnant beneficiaries and to beneficiaries during the 12-month postpartum period are excluded from copayment requirements.

Coverage during an extended postpartum period gives providers opportunities to assess beneficiaries’ physical recovery from pregnancy and childbirth, and to screen for and provide care to address conditions that can lead to morbidity and mortality in the later postpartum period. Comprehensive postpartum care should address chronic health conditions (e.g., diabetes or hypertension), mental health and psychological well-being (e.g., postpartum depression, interpersonal violence), and family planning (e.g., contraceptive counseling).

Postpartum visits are also a time for providers to counsel beneficiaries on nutrition, breastfeeding, tobacco and other drug use, and other preventive health issues that affect both the postpartum beneficiary's longer-term health and that of their infant.

Providers are reminded to access the Eligibility Verification System prior to rendering services.

Information regarding the comprehensive maternity services available through the Department's Healthy Beginnings Plus is available at:

<https://www.dhs.pa.gov/providers/Providers/Pages/Medical/Healthy-Beginnings.aspx>.