



Provider Alert
Guidance on NEMT #4
April 9, 2020

- To slow the spread of COVID-19, it is now necessary to further tighten protocols governing non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) for Maryland Medicaid beneficiaries. This guidance is in addition to previously issued guidance, which is located at <https://mmcp.health.maryland.gov/Pages/COVID-19-Provider-Updates.aspx>. This directive applies to all jurisdictions and vendors arranging for and providing Maryland Medicaid NEMT.
- Continue providing services as outlined in NEMT Guidance's No. 1, 2, and 3.
 - Guidance #1 (March 18, 2020):
<https://mmcp.health.maryland.gov/Medicaid%20COVID19/COVID-19%203Md.%20Medicaid%20NEMT%20Guidance.pdf>
 - Guidance #2 (March 24, 2020):
https://mmcp.health.maryland.gov/Medicaid%20COVID19/Md.%20Medicaid%20NEMT%20Guidance%20No.%202_3.24.20.pdf
 - Guidance #3 (March 30, 2020):
<https://mmcp.health.maryland.gov/Medicaid%20COVID19/2020%200327%20NEMT%20COVID-19%20GUIDANCE%20No%203a.pdf>
- Transportation to COVID-19 Testing Centers will be provided for eligible and qualified participants with a confirmed scheduled appointment at that location during regular business hours (8 AM – 4 PM M-F).
- Local NEMT offices must continue to telephonically screen participants and their medically necessary attendant, (i.e. parent, foster parent, caregiver or guardian) for symptoms per CDC guidance prior to scheduling a transport and at the provider's arrival for pick-up so transportation providers can take necessary precautions.
- Hospital discharges or transfer for PUI and those who are COVID-19 positive (as documented on the Provider Certification Form (PCF) shall be transported by ambulance. **(NEW 04/07/2020)**
- Transportation providers must follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) recommended guidance to protect their health and safety located at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.

- Participants must follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended guidance for locations with significant community-based transmission updated on their website at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html>. Participants are to provide their own cloth face covering to be worn throughout transport.
- Transportation vendors are responsible for screening their drivers and staff for symptoms per CDC guidance prior to providing transport. Transportation providers must screen themselves for respiratory and fever symptoms prior to transport. If symptoms exist, transportation providers must inform their local NEMT office that they cannot provide transportation. Transportation providers who are sick should stay home for at least 14 days.
- Local NEMT offices must urge beneficiaries with COVID-19 symptoms to call their provider's office before scheduling a transport so the provider's office can take precautions to prevent exposure to other individuals.
- Except in limited circumstances, rideshare arrangements (multiple riders in one vehicle) are prohibited. NEMT offices must schedule all transports as single rider trips. Parents, foster parents, caregivers or legal guardians of minor beneficiaries (under 18 years of age) and medically necessary attendants are not prohibited from riding with the beneficiary.
 - Exceptions:
 - Multi-row vans – one participant per row
 - Multiple Wheelchair Vans – with appropriate social distancing
 - Participants living in the same household or facility may transport together.
- **Transportation providers must take precautions as follows, pursuant to CDC guidance:**
 - If a transport must be made to sustain the life of a beneficiary confirmed to have COVID-19 or a Person Under Investigation (PUI) for COVID-19, the participant should wear at minimum a cloth face covering, and the provider must wear a disposable facemask and gloves.
 - Provider gloves and facemasks should be discarded immediately after use with a participant who is confirmed or suspected to have COVID-19.
 - Hands should be washed with soap and water after removal of gloves and facemask. If soap and water are not readily available, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) should be used until hands can be washed. Review <http://www.cdc.gov/cleanhands/> for more information.
- **Transportation providers and beneficiaries must practice proper hand hygiene per CDC guidance.**

- **Transportation providers should:**
 - Keep windows open when possible;
 - Increase ventilation; and
 - Wipe all high touch areas of the vehicle after transporting a PUI or with a known COVID-19 diagnosis.

- **Transportation providers must routinely disinfect all work areas.** Frequently touched surfaces in passenger compartments (including but limited to equipment control panels, adjacent flooring, walls and ceilings, door handles, seats, and driver cell phones) should be disinfected. Lists of EPA-registered disinfectants can be found at <http://www.epa.gov/oppad001/chemregindex.htm>.

- **Local health departments are asked to make special considerations to open the provision of their NEMT service contracts with other available ambulance companies to transport Medical Assistance participants with COVID-19 diagnoses and persons under investigation (PUI).** This consideration may assist with the prevention of overwhelming current ambulance transportation resources while continuing to transport participants in the safest manner possible.

- **Additionally, the Maryland Department of Health strongly encourages negotiation with NEMT providers to transport COVID-19 and PUI participants outside of the usual and customary boundaries of the county's geographical lines for testing when necessary.**