



TO: Georgia Medicaid-Enrolled Opioid Treatment Programs

FROM: Office of Addictive Diseases
Office of Medicaid Coordination

DATE: April 24, 2020

SUBJECT: Medication Assisted Treatment Guidance for the COVID-19 Emergency Response

Background: The Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) Office of Addictive Diseases (OAD) is Georgia's State Opioid Treatment Authority (SOTA). As such, DBHDD's OAD collaborates with other agencies in developing guidelines for establishing and/or closing Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) Programs operating in Georgia. As the SOTA, DBHDD is also responsible for establishing guidelines for the administration of MAT programs. In this capacity we are concerned with the continuity of care for all individuals currently enrolled in Opioid Treatment Programs in Georgia. Due to the current challenge of addressing COVID-19 in our state, we are providing additional guidance regarding take-home medication, telehealth, and billing for medication administration.

Updated Guidance:

For Opioid Treatment Providers, DBHDD is offering the following additional clarification for its network of providers as a follow-up to the [March 17, 2020](#) and [April 1, 2020](#) guidance:

- DBHDD does not reimburse for claims for pharmacy and medication nor its preparation or dispensing;
- DBHDD is permitting telemedicine/telephonic supervision (video-enabled only) of the individual's self-administration of take-home medication to be billed as either Medication Administration or Opioid Maintenance in accordance with those definitions in accordance with the [April 1, 2020](#) guidance. While we realize that many individuals do not have a video-enabled phone or a computer to use the video-enabled approved web platforms, this is a best-case allowance for the OTP nurse or pharmacist to be able to bill for this service while adhering to physical distancing as possible;
- DBHDD is permitting Nursing Assessment to occur via telemedicine, telephonic (*with or without video-enabling capability*), and/or web-based approved platforms for interaction. During the COVID-19 emergency response period, this may be in-person or via telemedicine/other telehealth platforms, as is clinically feasible and appropriate) with the individual to monitor, evaluate, assess, and/or carry out a physician's orders regarding the physical and/or psychological problems of the Individual; and
- In [March 19, 2020 Guidance](#), DBHDD outlined that vitals (i.e. in person services) would be required for 50% of services billed as Nursing Assessment and Care. Due to the high frequency of contact with individuals served in these specific programs, DBHDD is **not** requiring the OTP programs to comply with this provision. For OTP programs, Nursing Assessment and Health can be provided via telehealth, without regard to a ratio of in-person visits.

- DBHDD SOTA Guidance for Infection Control and Prevention of COVID-19, which was sent on **March 17, 2020**, remains in effect. In addition, we are asking all provider to report cases of COVID-19 to Georgia Department of Public Health.
<https://dph.georgia.gov/epidemiology/disease-reporting>

Finally, again, except for rare scenarios, the DBHDD does not pay for medication (take-home or otherwise).

Please join us to discuss this guidance via WebEx on Thursday, April 30, 2020 from @ 10 a. m. https://globalpage-prod.webex.com/join?surl=https%3A%2F%2Fsignin.webex.com%2Fcollabs%2F%23%2Fmeetings%2Fjoinbynumber%3FTrackID%3D%26hbxref%3D%26goid%3Dattend-meeting&language=en_US Meeting number (access code): 719 782 971

DBHDD's response to the State of Public Emergency for COVID-19 is continuously adapting based upon the needs of the community, the provider network, and most importantly, the people we mutually serve. Please know that as DBHDD receives more information about the needs of our state we will respond accordingly and keep you, our partners, well informed. For questions and further discussion please call 404-416-5225 or email Vonshurii.wrighten@dbhdd.ga.gov.