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MEMORANDUM

To: All Providers
From: Ann Kern, Provider Services Network Manager
Date: October 15, 2014
Subject: Important Information Regarding Timely Access Regulations

The Department of Managed Health Care (DMHC)'s Timely Access to Non-Emergency Health Care Services Regulations require health plans to ensure that health care services are provided to patients in a timely manner appropriate for the nature of the patient's condition, and consistent with good professional practice.

Under these regulations, the Alliance is required to conduct an annual survey to demonstrate that urgent and non-urgent care appointments (e.g., primary care, specialty care, urgent, ancillary, behavioral health) are offered within specified timeframes.

The 2014 Timely Access survey will be begin on October 17, 2014. The Myers Group, our third-party survey administrator, will begin contacting practices by phone on that date.

The survey, which is expected to take approximately 15 minutes, asks provider offices to identify, for individual physicians, the next available appointment (date/time) for various types of care.

To assist you in offering appointments to patients within the timeframes required under the Timely Access Regulations, we have included a reference document that details the appointment availability standards. Please share this information with the appointment schedulers in your office.

If your office is selected to participate, your cooperation in completing the survey is greatly appreciated.

If you have any questions regarding the survey, please contact your Provider Services Representative at (800) 700-3874 ext. 5504.

Timely Access Regulations – Appointment Availability Standards

Appointment Type:	Offer the Appointment Within:
Non-urgent appointments with primary care physicians	10 business days of request
Non-urgent appointments with specialists	15 business days of request
Urgent care appointments that do not require prior authorization	48 hours of request
Urgent care appointments that require prior authorization	96 hours of request
Non-urgent appointments for ancillary services (for diagnosis or treatment of injury, illness or other health condition)	15 business days of request
Non-urgent appointments with a nonphysician mental health care provider	10 business days of request

Exceptions to the Appointment Availability Standards

Preventive Care Services and Periodic Follow Up Care: Preventive care services and periodic follow up care are not subject to the appointment availability standards. These services may be scheduled in advance consistent with professionally recognized standards of practice as determined by the treating licensed health care provider acting within the scope of his or her practice. Periodic follow-up care includes but is not limited to, standing referrals to specialists for chronic conditions, periodic office visits to monitor and treat pregnancy, cardiac or mental health conditions, and laboratory and radiological monitoring for recurrence of disease.

Extending Appointment Waiting Time: The applicable waiting time for a particular appointment may be extended if the referring or treating licensed health care provider, or the health professional providing triage or screening services, as applicable, acting within the scope of his or her practice and consistent with professionally recognized standards of practice, has determined and noted in the relevant record that a longer waiting time will not have a detrimental impact on the health of the patient.

Advanced Access: The primary care appointment availability standard listed above may be met if the primary care physician office provides “advanced access.” “Advanced access” means offering an appointment to a patient with a primary care physician (or nurse practitioner or physician’s assistant) within the same or next business day from the time an appointment is requested (or a later date if the patient prefers not to accept the appointment offered within the same or next business day).

Reference: California Code of Regulations, Title 28, § 1300.67.2.2 Timely Access to Non-Emergency Health Care Services.