Department:	Utilization Management	**Original Approval:**	12/14/2011
Policy No:	UM231	**Last Approval:**	08/19/2026
Policy Title:	Obtaining Medicare or State Benefits During a Federal or State Disaster or Other Public Health Emergency Policy		
Approved By:	Clinical Services Leadership Team		
Dependencies:	N/A		

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for facilitating the provision of benefits for Medicare or State beneficiaries during a federal or Washington state disaster or other public health emergency in accordance with Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) or with Washington State Health Care Authority (HCA) requirements.

Policy

This policy applies during any declared emergency or disaster in Washington state. This includes, but not limited to, situations where the governor of Washington state declares an emergency, FEMA (http://www.fema.gov/) issues a major disaster declaration in Community Health Plan of Washington's (CHPW) service area, the President declares a national emergency, or the Secretary of Health and Human Services declares a public health emergency. Such emergencies may include pandemics, earthquakes, wildfires, bioterrorist attacks, or other large-scale events that significantly disrupt access to care or health services. Community Health Plan of Washington (CHPW) will ensure appropriate and adequate provision of benefits for our Medicare and/or State beneficiaries during all declared emergencies or disasters.

In any declared emergency or disaster in Washington state, if CHPW is concerned about disruption of provision of needed benefits, CHPW may, without waiting for explicit Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS); Health Care Authority (HCA) guidance; and/or Cascade Select, voluntarily implement all, or portions, of the guidance presented below.

The voluntary actions that CHPW may choose in order to facilitate the provision of benefits are as follows:

For Medicare Beneficiaries:

- CHPW may, at its discretion, allow Part A/B and supplemental plan benefits to

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be furnished at specified non-contracted facilities.

NOTE: Part A/B benefits must, per 42 CFR § 422.204(b)(3), be furnished at certified facilities;

- CHPW may, at its discretion, waive in full, or in part, requirements for authorization or pre- notification; and
- CHPW may, at its discretion, temporarily reduce plan-approved cost-sharing amounts. Furthermore, although CHPW is required to notify members 30 days in advance of plan changes, this 30-day notification requirement can be waived by CMS during a declared emergency, provided all the changes (such as reduction of cost-sharing and waiving authorization) benefit the member.

Additional information:

- CHPW will resume normal operations once the emergency or disaster is over. Typically, the source that declared the disaster would clarify when the disaster ends. However, in the case of disasters declared by FEMA, if the disaster period has not closed 30 days from the initial declaration, and if CMS has not indicated an end date to the disaster, CHPW will resume normal operations 30 days from the initial declaration.
- CMS still reserves the right to assess each disaster or emergency on a case-by-case basis and issue further guidance supplementing or modifying the above guidance.
- In response to certain disasters or emergencies, the Secretary of Health and Human Services may exercise his waiver authority under Section 1135 of the Social Security Act. Under the Section 1135 waiver authority (when invoked), CMS may *require* CHPW to allow enrollees affected by the emergency or disaster to receive care from non-network providers at in-network cost-sharing.
- During emergencies or disasters in which the Secretary has invoked his authority under Section 1135, information about the waivers is posted on the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) website (http://www.dhhs.gov/). The CMS website (http://www.cms.hhs.gov) will also provide detailed guidance for CHPW in the event of a disaster or emergency in which the Secretary's 1135 waiver authority is being exercised. During these disasters and emergencies, CHPW will check these websites frequently.

For WA Apple Health Integrated Managed Care (IMC), WA Apple Health Expansion, Behavioral Health Services Only, and Cascade Select Beneficiaries:

- CHPW may, at its discretion, allow plan benefits to be furnished at specified non-contracted facilities.
- CHPW may, at its discretion, waive in full, or in part, requirements for

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authorization or pre- notification; and
- CHPW may, at its discretion, temporarily reduce plan-approved cost-sharing amounts.

Additional information:
- CHPW will resume normal operations once the emergency or disaster is over. Typically, the source that declared the disaster would clarify when the disaster ends.
- Washington State HCA still reserves the right to assess each disaster or emergency on a case-by-case basis and issue further guidance supplementing or modifying the above guidance.

Process to implement waiver, reduction, or temporary suspension of Authorization or Pre-certification:

1) In response to federal or state natural disasters or a public health emergency, the Senior Medical Director of Behavioral Health, Senior Medical Director, and Senior Director of Utilization Management and TOC will review and propose changes for the feasibility of implementation and impact on members and providers in addressing concerns brought up by the event.

2) All proposed reductions and changes to normal operations will be vetted through Claims Operations to ensure proposed changes can be operationalized in a way that will ensure fidelity of provider payment.

3) Once UM leadership and Claims have confirmed the feasibility of implementation, the proposed changes are forwarded to the Chief Health Officer/Chief Medical Officer for approval.

4) The Chief Health Officer/Chief Medical Officer will obtain Executive Leadership Council (ELT) approval for implementation.

5) Provider and member notification will be based on the scope of the change and impacted parties. Communication can include outreach to individual providers or members, outreach to impacted Community Health Centers, and/or outreach to the CHPW provider community through provider newsletter alert.

6) CHPW may implement additional temporary modifications to utilization management processes, authorization requirements, provider access, or member benefits as required by Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), Washington State Health Care Authority (HCA), or other applicable regulatory agencies during a declared disaster, emergency, or public health event.

CHPW will notify parties identified for initial outreach, prior to the resumption of normal operations.

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List of Appendices

A. Detailed Revision History

Citations & References

CFR		
WAC		
RCW		
LOB & Contract Citation	☒ **WAHIMC**	P&P supports all LOB requirements
	☒ **BHSO**	P&P supports all LOB requirements
	☐ **Wraparound**	
	☐ **SMAC**	
	☐ **HH**	
	☐ **AHE**	
	☐ **MA/DSNP**	
	☐ **CS**	
Other Requirements		
NCQA Elements		
References		

Revision History

SME Review:	07/26/2012; 06/09/2013; 08/06/2014; 07/31/2015; 08/18/2016; 08/15/2017; 06/21/2018; 06/19/2019; 05/28/2020; 11/17/2020; 09/08/2021; 02/10/2022; 12/14/2022; 10/18/2023; 07/30/2024; 06/24/2025; 06/03/2026
Approval:	12/14/2011; 08/08/2012; 06/28/2013; 08/13/2014; 08/04/2015; 08/23/2016; 08/18/2017; 06/25/2018; 06/21/2019; 06/25/2020; 09/28/2021; 02/11/2022; 12/28/2022; 10/19/2023; 08/12/2024; 07/30/2025; 08/19/2026

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Appendix A: Detailed Revision History

Revision Date	Revision Description	Revision Made By
11/29/2011	Original	Joe Osborne
12/14/2011	Approval	MMLT
07/26/2012	Name change to specify Medicare; minor grammatical changes	Lucy Sutphen, MD, FACP
08/08/2012	Approval	MMLT
06/09/2013	Reviewed and policy – no changes	Jane Daughenbaugh
06/28/2013	Approval	MMLT
08/06/2014	Modified Contract Citation section layout	Andrew Boe
08/13/2014	Approval	MMLT
07/31/2015	Updated to integrate UM232 State Benefits during a State disaster. (UM232 will be retired)	Kelly Force
08/04/2015	Approval	MMLT
08/18/2016	Reviewed - Minor changes	Cyndi Stilson, RN
08/18/2016	Reviewed – No changes	Jane Daughenbaugh, RN
08/23/2016	Approved	MMLT
08/15/2017	Reviewed - Minor changes	Cyndi Stilson, RN
08/18/2017	Approved MMLT	MMLT
06/21/2018	Minor editing	Drew Breuckman
06/25/2018	Approved	Patty Jones, RN, MBA
06/19/2019	Reviewed, with minor edits	Yves Houghton, RN, BSN
06/21/2019	Approval	MMLT
05/28/2020	Changed ‘enrollee’ to ‘member’; removed contract citation reference to WAH-IMC; updated Apple Health to IMC	Yves Houghton, RN, BSN
06/20/2020	Approval	Ma’ata Hardman, RN, MBA, CCM
06/25/2020	Approval	CMO Cabinet
11/17/2020	Updated LOB and C&R; minor edits	Yves Houghton, RN, BSN
11/20/2020	Approval	CMO Cabinet
09/08/2021	Reviewed, with minor edits	Yves Houghton, RN, BSN
09/24/2021	Approval	Ma’ata Hardman
09/28/2021	Approval	CMO Cabinet

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02/10/2022	Update to include process for approving and communicating temporary authorization changes	Justin Fowler, RN MSN
02/11/2022	Approval	CMO Cabinet
12/14/2022	Reviewed, no changes	Yves Houghton, RN BSN
12/22/2022	Approval	Ma'ata Hardman
12/28/2022	Approval	CMO Cabinet
10/18/2023	Updated CMO title to Chief Health Officer/Chief Medical Officer. Reviewed, with minor edits, no content changes.	Yves Houghton, RN BSN
10/18/2023	Approval	Ma'ata Hardman
10/19/2023	Approval	Clinical Services Leadership Team
07/30/2024	Added WA Apple Health Expansion	Yves Houghton, RN BSN
08/04/2024	Approval	Ma'ata Hardman
08/12/2024	Approval	Clinical Services Leadership Team
06/24/2025	Language updated to clarify that the policy applies to all types of public health emergencies and disasters, including pandemics, earthquakes, wildfires, and bioterrorist attacks.	Yves Houghton, RN BSN
07/23/2025	Approval	Ma'ata Hardman
07/30/2025	Approval	Clinical Services Leadership Team
06/03/2026	Reviewed. Added language allowing CHPW to implement temporary utilization management modifications required by applicable regulatory agencies during declared emergencies or public health events.	Yves Houghton, RN BSN
08/05/2026	Approval	Angie Davis, RN, MSN
08/19/2026	Approval	Ma'ata Hardman
08/19/2026	Approval	Clinical Services Leadership Team

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