



Improve Your Patient’s Experience with Timely Access to Care

MAKE APPOINTMENTS OR RESPOND TO PATIENTS WITHIN REGULATORY STANDARDS

Appointment wait time standards¹ must be met by primary care physicians (PCPs) or specialty care physicians (SCPs). Your patients have the right to appointments within these standards.

After-hours

Directing patients to the appropriate after-hours care can:

- Reduce improper use of emergency room services.
- Improve health outcomes.

Be sure to discuss after-hours and weekend access to care during your first visit with each patient and at least yearly.



In-office wait time for scheduled appointments must not exceed 15 minutes.

After-hours access	Standard
Emergency care	Call 911 or go to the emergency room.
Urgent care	Call the provider’s office 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Phone response	Standard
Phone answer time at provider’s office	Answer calls within 30 seconds.

Check out the Provider Manual for more information.

Follow these steps:

1. Log on to www.wellcare.com/California/Providers/Medicare.
2. Select *Resources*, and then you will be directed to a page where you can download a PDF document of the Provider Manual.

¹ The Department of Health Care Services (DHCS), Department of Managed Health Care (DMHC), Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), and National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) require health plans to assess and report availability by contracted providers.

Access Standards

Appointments	
Appointment type	Access standard
Urgent care	
Urgent care appointment with primary care physician (PCP).	Within 48 hours of request.
Urgent care appointment with specialist (prior approval needed).	Within 96 hours of request.
Non-urgent appointments	
Non-urgent care appointment with PCP.	Within 10 business days of request.
Non-urgent care appointment with specialist.	Within 15 business days of request.
Appointment for ancillary services.	Within 15 business days of request.
Behavioral health appointments	
Urgent care appointment with non-physician behavioral health care provider or behavioral health care physician (psychiatrist) that does not require prior authorization.	Within 48 business hours of request.
Urgent care appointment with non-physician behavioral health care provider or behavioral health care physician (psychiatrist) that requires prior authorization.	Within 96 business hours of request.
Non-urgent initial appointment with non-physician behavioral health care provider.	Within 10 business days of request.
Non-urgent appointment with behavioral health care physician (psychiatrist).	Within 15 business days of request.
Non-urgent care follow-up appointment with non-physician mental health care provider ² .	Within 10 business days of request.
After-hours	
After-hours access	Access standard
After-hours physician availability.	Call back within 30 minutes of call.
After-hours emergency room instruction.	Appropriate emergency instructions.
Provider office phone	
The survey evaluates provider compliance with the phone access standards as set forth by DHCS.	
Phone access	Access standard
Answer member calls (can be live or recorded).	Within 60 seconds.
Return member calls for non-urgent issues.	Within one business day.
In-office wait time	
Access	Access standard
In-office wait time for scheduled appointments (PCP and specialists).	Not to exceed 15 minutes.



Reminder:

Interpreter services must be available at the time of the appointment.

To request interpreter services for members, contact:

866-999-3945

²APL 22-007 Monitoring and Annual Reporting Changes due to SB 221, AB 457 and Amendments to Rule 1300.67.2.2.