

February 2018

Appointment availability and after-hours access requirements

Primary care providers (PCPs) and specialty providers must maintain appointment availability and after-hours access standards. This will ensure that members receive care in a timely manner.

Appointment availability requirements

Appointment type	Appointment standard
Emergency visits	Immediately
Urgent visits	Within 24 hours
Nonurgent sick visits ¹	Within 72 hours
Routine or preventive visits ¹	Within six weeks
Medically necessary specialist visits	Same day (within 24 hours of referral)
Routine specialist visits	Within one month of referral
Lab referrals or X-rays — urgent care	Within 48 hours or as clinically indicated
Lab referrals or X-rays — regular appointments	Not to exceed three weeks
Initial prenatal visit ^{1, 2}	For first trimester: 14 days For second trimester: seven days For third trimester: three days High risk: within three days or sooner if needed

1 In-office wait time for scheduled appointments should not routinely exceed 45 minutes, including time in the waiting room and examining room. If a provider is delayed, the patient should be notified immediately. If the anticipated wait time is expected to be longer than 90 minutes, the patient should be offered a new appointment.

2 For women who are past their first trimester of pregnancy on the first day they are determined to be eligible for Healthy Louisiana, first prenatal appointments shall be scheduled as outlined in this chart.

After-hours access requirements

You are required to abide by the following standards to ensure access to care for our members:

- Offer 24/7 telephone access for members. A 24-hour telephone service may be used. The service may be answered by a designee such as:
 - An on-call physician.
 - A nurse practitioner with physician backup.
- Have an answering service or a pager system; however, this must be a confidential line for member information and/or questions. If an answering service or pager system is used, the call must be returned within 30 minutes.
- Be available to provide medically necessary services. You or another physician must offer this service.
- Follow referral/precertification guidelines. This is a requirement for covering physicians.

Additionally, we encourage you to offer after-hours office care in the evenings and on Saturdays. It is not acceptable to automatically direct the member to the emergency room when the PCP is not available.

What if I need assistance?

If you have questions, contact your local Provider Relations representative or call Provider Services at **1-504-836-8888** or **1-844-521-6942**.

<https://providers.healthybluela.com>

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