

Accessibility and Availability

In accordance with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) and Texas Department of Insurance (TDI) mandates, El Paso Health must monitor our Providers on an annual basis for 24 hour availability and office accessibility compliance.

Your partnership is paramount in the success of our Quality Improvement initiatives and requirements mandated by TDI and HHSC.

What is office accessibility?

El Paso Health members must be able to schedule an appointment for covered services within the time frames mandated by TDI and HHSC.

The standards for Providers are as follows:

1. **Emergency Services** must be provided upon member presentation at the service delivery site, including at non-network and out-of-area facilities.
2. **Urgent Care** including specialty urgent care and behavioral health services must be provided within 24 hours of request.
3. **Routine Primary Care** must be provided within 14 calendar days of request.
4. **Specialty Routine Care** must be provided within 21 calendar days of request.
5. **Specialty Therapy (PT/OT/ST) evaluations** must be provided within 21 calendar days of submission of signed referral.
6. **Initial Outpatient Behavioral Health** visits must be provided within 14 calendar days of request.
7. **Follow up after Behavioral Health inpatient stay** must be provided within 7 calendar days. BH Providers must contact Members who have missed appointments within 24 hours to reschedule appointments.
8. **Routine Specialty Care referrals** must be provided within 5 calendar days of request.
9. **Pre-natal Care** must be provided within 14 calendar days of request, except for high-risk pregnancies or new members in the third trimester, for whom an appointment must be offered within 5 calendar days, or immediately, if an emergency exists.
10. **Preventive Health Services** for adults (21 years and older) must be provided within 90 calendar days of request.
11. **Preventive Health Services** for children less than 6 months of age must be provided within 14 calendar days of request. For children 6 months to 20 years of age, services must be provided within 60 calendar days of request.
12. **Case Management for Children and Pregnant Women** services must be provided within 14 calendar days of request.

TDI and HHSC have also established that a member wait at the office should not be longer than 15 minutes to be taken to the exam room.

What is after-hours availability?

As mandated by TDI and HHSC, all PCP and Behavioral Health Providers must be available 24 hours, 7 days a week. If the Provider delegates this duty, the covering Provider must also be available 24 hours, 7 days a week.

The standards for acceptable after-hours availability are as follows:

1. Answering service meets language requirements of that for major population groups. Answering service must be able to contact the Provider or other designated medical practitioner.
2. Recording meets language requirements. Directs patient to call another phone number to reach the Provider or designated medical practitioner. Other phone number provided must be answered by someone at the time of call.
3. Call is transferred to an on-call person. Call meets language requirements. Person on-call must be able to reach the Provider or designated medical practitioner to return call to patient.

Once the Provider is paged, he/she or the designated medical practitioner must return call within 30 minutes.

The following is considered **non-acceptable** criteria:

1. Office telephone is only answered during office hours.
2. Office telephone is answered by a recording that tells patients to leave message.
3. Office telephone is answered by a recording that tells patient to go to an Emergency Room for services needed.
4. Returning after-hours calls past 30 minutes.
5. Member is informed of a fee for after hour calls (per the El Paso Health Provider Manual and Provider Contract)

When are A&A surveys conducted?

El Paso Health's Quality Improvement personnel will conduct a random sampling of the Provider network every quarter. Based on compliance with El Paso Health's A & A standards our Providers may be surveyed more than once a year.

Acknowledgements

El Paso Health knows that your time is incredibly valuable and your cooperation in this State mandate is greatly appreciated. If you have any suggestions and/or questions regarding the A & A surveys please feel free to contact any of the following:

- The Provider Relations Department at 532-3778, ask to speak to Provider Relations
- The Quality Improvement Department at 532-3778 ext. 1165, 1106, or 1177
- Our Medical Director, Jorge Guzman, M.D., at 532-3778 ext. 1221

Thank you for your commitment to improving the quality of service we offer to the El Paso community.