

**An Important Message from
The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC)**

Urgent Changes to COVID for the Pharmacy Benefit

Background:

VDP published notices on Aug. 19 and Dec. 5, 2024, regarding COVID-19 changes. These changes were due to the expiration of the federal “Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness Act for Medical Countermeasures Against COVID-19” (PREP Act). VDP received notification on Dec. 13, 2024, that the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services issued a new amendment under the current declaration of the PREP Act that will extend through Dec. 2029 selected current amendments facilitating pharmacy access. This means that the expiration of several flexibilities VDP previously communicated will no longer occur. Therefore, MCOs must discontinue any changes that would have ended these flexibilities and continue these past Jan. 1, 2025, through Dec. 31, 2029. These include the following:

- Active pharmacists, active supervised pharmacist interns, and active pharmacy technicians are authorized by the PREP Act to administer COVID-19 and influenza vaccines for three years and older.
- Active pharmacists are authorized by the PREP Act to order/prescribe COVID-19 at home tests and COVID-19 therapeutics.

Only the products on the VDP formulary are available for reimbursement to pharmacies through the pharmacy benefit.

Key Details:

Topic #1: Change to Patient Vaccination Age at Pharmacy

- New Requirements as of Dec. 13, 2024:
- MCOs must continue to cover and reimburse through the pharmacy benefit COVID-19 and influenza vaccines on the VDP formulary that are administered by active pharmacists, active supervised pharmacist interns, and active pharmacy technicians to Medicaid members ages three and up through Dec. 31, 2029.

Topic #2: Pharmacist Prescribing At-Home COVID-19 Tests and Therapeutics

- New Requirements as of Dec. 13, 2024:
- MCOs and PBMs must continue coverage of COVID-19 at-home tests and COVID-19 therapeutics that are included on the VDP formulary when prescribed by a pharmacist through Dec. 31, 2029.

Action:

MCOs must ensure they and their PBMs comply with this policy by Jan. 1, 2025. MCOs must implement system changes and policies to prevent claims for COVID tests or COVID therapeutics prescribed by a pharmacist.

Questions?

Please contact UnitedHealthcare Customer Service at 888-887-9003, 8 a.m.–6 p.m. CT, Monday–Friday.