

Medical Assistance Transportation Operations Memorandum *Operations* MATP OPS # 01/2012-027

Date: January 13, 2012

Subject: New Protocol for Transportation to Methadone Providers

To: All Statewide County MATP Program Offices

From: Tyrone E. Williams, Director, Division of Medical Assistance Transportation

Purpose:

To notify county Medical Assistance Transportation Program (MATP) agencies of the new protocol that limits trips for methadone treatment to the closest clinic to a recipient's residence.

Background:

With the exception of grandfathered recipients riding paratransit, the MATP currently provides transportation to methadone treatment to the choice of the two closest clinics to a Medical Assistance (MA) recipient's home address. This policy affects both mileage reimbursement recipients as well as individuals using paratransit vehicles. A recipient may request an exception to this policy for various reasons. The MATP reviews all exception requests with the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS) and the requests are approved or denied, accordingly.

Act 121 now revises this policy to require the coordination of mileage reimbursement and paratransit trips to the closest methadone treatment program to a MA recipient's residence.

Discussion:

Effective March 1, 2012, MATP county offices shall only coordinate paratransit and mileage reimbursement trips for MA recipients up to the closest in-network methadone treatment program to a recipient's residence (This includes previously grandfathered recipients).

A. Mileage Reimbursement

Counties must ensure that mileage reimbursement checks reflect mileage to and from the closest clinic to a recipient's residence with the first reimbursement form submitted after the inception of the new policy. A recipient may request an exception, but until that exception is approved, the reimbursement check will only be for the miles to and from the closest clinic.

Please keep in mind that recipients are free to attend any clinic of their choosing. However, the county program office will only reimburse mileage to the closest clinic to their residence. Essentially, it does not matter what clinic the recipient indicates he or she is attending on the reimbursement form. As long as it contains verification of attendance, reimbursement checks must reflect mileage to and from the closest clinic to the recipient's residence.

B. Paratransit

Counties that group methadone maintenance recipients on dedicated vehicles for transport to and from programs may have to alter their present routes.

County programs may want to consider the cost of service when coordinating transportation. For example, it may be more cost effective to continue with a "full" bus versus a bus that may have only one (1) or two (2) recipients, particularly, if the cost will remain the same regardless of the number of recipients. This is at the discretion of the county MATP office when determining least costly and most appropriate.

Exception process

If a recipient requests a trip to a clinic that is not one of the closest clinics to their residence, the recipient must request an exception that will explain their need to travel to that clinic. Exceptions could be granted for the following reasons:

- The facility is not accepting new patients- It is possible that some programs may reach a capacity level where, through no fault of the recipient, attendance at the closest program would not be possible. If that is the case, recipients would be placed on that particular program's waiting list and transportation (both mileage reimbursement and paratransit) would be authorized to the second closest clinic to the recipient's residence.
- The recipient does not meet the intake criteria for the facility
- Physical Health Complications
- Safety Issues
- Medical Emergency

A recipient must provide in writing a request for an exception to this policy that includes one of the reasons above or another valid reason that the department will review in conjunction with the recipients BH-MCO. The MATP county office will identify staff that will help a recipient write their request for an exception, if the recipient requests assistance. If the department grants an exception, the recipient may receive paratransit transportation to the second closest program.

A recipient notice (which the department will supply and county MATP offices will copy and send) will instruct all recipients to send their requests for exceptions to the following address:

**DPW MATP Exception Request
DGS Annex Complex
PO Box 2675
Harrisburg, PA 17105
Fax-(717)705-8112**

Recipient Notices

MATP county offices will send notices (which the department will develop) to:

1. All current recipients **within the standard of the new policy** notifying them of the new policy, but clarifying that based on their trips, their paratransit trips will not be impacted unless or until they choose to travel to a different clinic.
2. all recipients **who are traveling distances outside the standard of the new policy**, prior to March 1, 2012, notifying them of the new policy.

These notices must be sent at least 30 days prior to implementation of this policy. In addition, MATP offices shall emphasize the new policy to all new methadone maintenance recipients at initial application.

Next Steps:

County MATP offices should begin to take the necessary actions to comply with this policy by March 1, 2011. This includes identifying the number of MA recipients, including grandfathered recipients that would be affected by this policy, per the description above, for the purposes of mailing.

Should you have any questions, please contact your program manager or advisor for your respective county.