

# Operations Memorandum

## Medical Assistance

**OPS081101**

**November 12, 2008**

**SUBJECT:** Expediting Medical Assistance Applications When the Individual has a Medical Emergency  
**TO:** Executive Directors  
**FROM:** Joanne Glover, Director, Bureau of Operations

### **Purpose**

To inform County Assistance Offices (CAOs) of the procedure for expedited processing of a Medical Assistance (MA) application when the individual indicates a medical emergency.

### **Background**

Per Medical Assistance Eligibility Handbook (MAEH) Section 303.21, the individual has the right to immediate help if their medical provider has determined they have a medical emergency. CAOs will expedite these applications, making every effort to complete them within five business days of receipt of the request for emergency MA. In order to establish if an individual has a medical emergency, verification must be provided from a physician, or medical professional under the physician's supervision and authority, e.g., physician assistant or certified registered nurse practitioner. This verification can include verbal telephone contact with the medical provider or written documentation of an immediate need for surgery, medication or other medical procedures/devices.

### **Discussion**

Effective November 19, 2008, when the individual indicates, either on the application for MA or by contacting the CAO, that their medical provider has informed them that they have a medical emergency, the CAO will:

- ☐ **Expedite** the processing of the application for MA.
- ☐ **Require verification** of income, resources, and non-financial eligibility requirements, including citizenship and identity, as well as documentation of the emergency from the medical provider.

**NOTE:** Verification of the emergency can be a statement from the medical provider on their letterhead or prescription pad, or completed Department forms.

- ☐ **Contact the individual** by phone on the day the application for MA is received if pending information or verification is needed to authorize MA.
- ☐ **Send a letter to the individual** on the day the application is received requesting any pending information or verification that is needed to authorize MA if an attempt to contact by phone to get the pending information or verification is not successful.
- ☐ **Assist the individual** if the individual is not able to provide the necessary information or verification needed to determine eligibility for MA.
- ☐ **Authorize eligibility for MA** once all necessary information and verification is available to determine eligibility for MA. **Deny eligibility for MA** if all necessary information and verification is received and it is determined that the individual is not eligible for MA.
- ☐ **Contact the individual** to notify the individual of the disposition of the application for MA.
- ☐ **Issue appropriate notice** of the disposition of the application for MA.

**NOTE:** If the individual is found ineligible for MA, please provide the individual with a detailed explanation as to why eligibility for MA is being denied.

CAO staff needs to be aware of the following when handling requests for immediate MA to cover an emergency need for MA coverage:

- ☐ The CAO staff is encouraged to process an application for emergency MA as soon as possible, but no later than five business days from receipt of the request.

**NOTE:** If an emergency is noted on the application, the date stamp is considered the date of request. If the client contacts the caseworker either in person or by phone, the date of contact is the date of request.

- ☐ If all verification necessary for determining eligibility for an individual with an emergency is provided, the determination will not be held up if verification is still pending for other applying household members.

**EXAMPLE:** Mr. James submitted an application for MA for himself and his son. Mr. James indicated on his application that he has an emergency medical situation. After the CAO contacted him, Mr. James provided all necessary verification for himself and his son, with the exception of his son's birth certificate, which he is trying to obtain from his ex-wife. The CAO will review Mr. James for benefits and authorize, if eligible, while waiting for the document for his son.

- The processing of these applications may require additional contacts with the individual in need of MA to expedite the processing of the application. The individual's health may hinder their attempts to obtain verification. The CAO should assist them whenever possible, but will not authorize MA without all necessary verification.
- The CAO needs to establish a process to identify any application for MA that is received with an urgent need for MA to ensure that the application is processed as quickly as possible. There will be instances in which the CAO may be unsure if an individual's situation is an emergency. They should proceed as if it is an emergency until they receive verification to the contrary.
- Undocumented and temporary aliens are eligible to be reviewed for emergency MA.

The following is an example of when the CAO should expedite the application because of an emergency medical situation:

**EXAMPLE:**

Mr. Jones submitted an application on Wednesday, January 2. He provided verification from a doctor that he has surgery scheduled for Thursday, January 10, to correct a medical condition. The medical condition is not immediately life threatening, but will become so if left untreated. His surgeon refused to perform the surgery without documentation that Mr. Jones acquired medical coverage. The caseworker contacted Mr. Jones by telephone on January 2 and requested verification of Mr. Jones' income and resources. Mr. Jones provided all required documentation necessary to determine eligibility for MA on January 3. The worker processed the application and sent notice of eligibility for MA on January 3. The worker also contacted Mr. Jones to inform him of the decision verbally the same day.

**Next Steps**

1. Review this memorandum with appropriate staff.

2. Direct questions regarding this Operations Memorandum to your area manager.
3. The Operations Memorandum becomes obsolete upon updating of the MAEH and Supplemental Handbooks.