

# Montana Health Care Programs MESSENGER

## Important Announcement

### DPHHS NEEDS YOUR CORRECT MAILING ADDRESS!

The COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE) has been extended until at least mid-October. When the PHE ends, DPHHS will begin the process of redetermining all current Medicaid member's eligibility for continued Medicaid coverage. It is essential that DPHHS has up-to-date contact information for you, our Medicaid members, so you can receive important notifications. If DPHHS cannot reach you, your coverage may end.

If you have had a change of address since April 1, 2020, please update this as soon as possible.

- The fastest way is to go to [apply.mt.gov](https://apply.mt.gov) and follow the directions that appear in red at the top of the page, [OR](#);
- Call the Public Assistance Helpline at (888) 706-1535, [OR](#);
- Mail a letter to DPHHS, P.O. Box 202925, Helena, MT 59620-2925, [OR](#);
- Fax a letter with the member's name, date of birth, case number if known, social security number, previous address, and new address to the DPHHS at (877) 418-4533, [OR](#);
- Go to an [Office of Public Assistance Field Office](#).

### WHAT HAPPENED IN EARLY 2020?

A public health emergency (PHE) was declared in March 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Montana's DPHHS adjusted its eligibility processes for Montana's Medicaid and Healthy Montana Kids (HMK) programs so individuals would keep their healthcare coverage during the emergency. The changes to eligibility processes included:

- temporarily stopping the annual renewal process of checking if individuals qualified for continued healthcare coverage;
- not processing reported/discovered changes in circumstances (such as changes in income or household size) that would normally cause an individual to lose coverage; and
- not ending an individual's coverage unless the individual requested it or moved out of state.



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## Family Health

- Children thrive when they have regular connections with responsive and caring adults. Families [experiencing high stress](#), such as poverty, food insecurity, untreated mental illness, chronic disease, and impacts from COVID-19, can interrupt a parent's ability to provide the supportive relationship their children thrive on.

## **REPEAT: DPHHS NEEDS YOUR CORRECT MAILING ADDRESS!**

When the PHE ends, perhaps in mid-October 2022 or perhaps later, DPHHS will need to contact all Montana Medicaid and HMK members to begin the cycle of yearly renewals for healthcare coverage qualification. Giving DPHHS your correct mailing address will ensure you receive these important notices.

### **WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO CHECK/UPDATE YOUR CORRECT MAILING ADDRESS? (REPEATING!)**

- The fastest way is to go to [apply.mt.gov](https://apply.mt.gov) and follow the directions that appear in red at the top of the page, [OR](#);
- Call the Public Assistance Helpline at (888) 706-1535, [OR](#);
- Mail a letter to DPHHS, P.O. Box 202925, Helena, MT 59620-2925, [OR](#);
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- Go to an [Office of Public Assistance Field Office](#).



## **“Autism Treatment Services” are now “Applied Behavior Analysis Services”**

The Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities Division (BHDDD) has made changes to Autism Treatment Services, including renaming the program to “Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Services.”

Autism Treatment Services have been part of the Medicaid benefit package since 2017. Beginning in 2020, BHDD began working on changes to the program in to increase the number of people eligible for these services. Additional changes were made based on provider feedback. These changes make the program more flexible and allow people to receive the services sooner.

ABA is a type of therapy that can improve social, communication, and learning skills through positive reinforcement. This therapy is provided by a licensed Board-Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA).

- Severe and persistent stress overloads our ability to stay calm and in control during challenges. Working together to [create support and reduce burdens on families](#) can make a huge difference for the health of Montana's children.
- Learn how to support and [improve resiliency in your home](#).

## **Asthma Home Visiting Service**

There's great news for Montanans living with asthma. The Montana Asthma Home Visiting Program (MAP) is now available in all 56 counties! Nine existing MAP sites continue to provide in-home asthma education and support in 24 counties. As of May 2022, the program began accepting referrals for virtual home visiting in the counties outside of MAP service areas.

The program includes 6 contacts with a trained nurse or respiratory therapist over one year. Participants report fewer emergency dept. visits and hospitalizations, fewer missed school and workdays, and better asthma control. While asthma home visiting is not currently covered by Montanan Medicaid, this program is [free of charge](#) and any Montana resident with an official asthma diagnosis is eligible to enroll regardless of insurance type, income level, or location.

ABA services have been available to people who are Medicaid eligible with a diagnosis of an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and no older than age 20. ABA services may now also be available for people who are Medicaid eligible and:

- Eligible for the Developmental Disabilities Program and no older than the age of 20;

**OR**

- Have a qualifying mental health diagnosis and are no older than age 17 or no older than age 20 and enrolled in a high school program.

ABA Services Include: assessment, treatment plan development, service delivery by a Registered Behavior Technician and supervision by a BCBA. ABA Services occur face-to-face and may be delivered to the person in the home, community or office setting. The services may also be delivered individually or to two or more people at the same time. Training and support may also be provided to parents, guardians, or caregivers.

To learn more about ABA services, please visit [Applied Behavior Analysis Services \(mt.gov\)](https://www.appliedbehavioranalysis.com/mt.gov).

## State and Local Health Officials Encourage Safe and Healthy Swimming this Summer

**Spending time outdoors around water and in swimming pools is a great way to stay active and healthy during summer in Montana.**

The Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS), along with local health professionals, want to remind Montanans to stay safe while having fun in the water over the coming months. Remember to be aware of the related health and safety risks.

Over the past 10 years, there have been an average of 20 accidental drowning deaths per year in Montana. Almost 50% of the drownings were in natural water, while others were at home or in swimming pools.

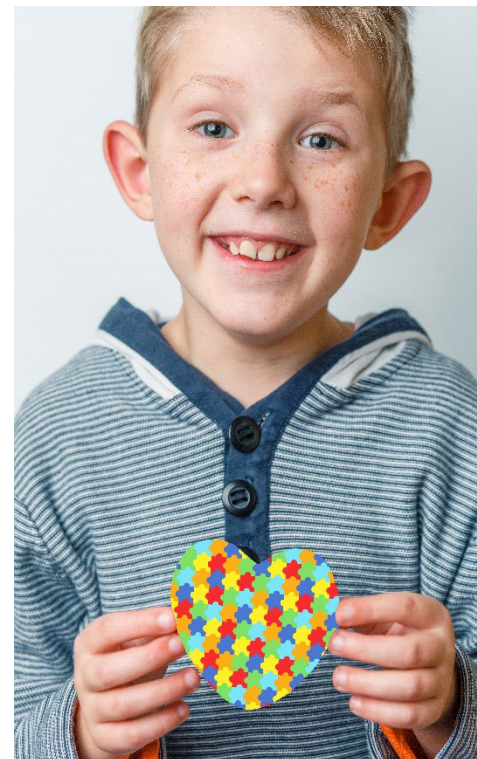
**“Every day in the U.S., two children younger than 14 years old die from drowning,”** said Maureen Ward, DPHHS Injury Prevention Program Manager. **“Drownings are a leading cause of death for children aged 1 to 4.”**

Ward said parents and guardians can play a key role in protecting children by taking these steps: learn life-saving skills such as CPR and basic swim instructions, fence off swimming pools, always use Coast Guard-approved life jackets around natural waters, and always watch closely when kids are near water, including bathtubs.

In-home and virtual visits follow the same structure.

Data collected during the pandemic showed virtual visits are effective at improving health outcomes. All participants receive an allergen proof mattress, pillow covers and HEPA air purifiers to help create a clean space in the home.

The MAP has created a secure online referral portal, which can be used by patients to self-refer to the program or by providers to refer patients. The portal has been used to refer and enroll dozens of MAP clients. If you live in a community with no MAP site, you will be assigned to one of the 9 sites for virtual home visiting. The referral portal link can be found on the [asthma.mt.gov](https://www.asthma.mt.gov) website. Find [contact info for local MAP sites](#).



Ward adds that because drownings happen quickly and quietly, adults should avoid distractions, including cellphones and alcohol. When supervising children near water, adults should keep children in their line of sight.

Water recreation can also cause illness from parasites or bacteria that live in the water. In 2020, 121 cases of cryptosporidiosis and giardiasis were reported in Montana. Of those with risk factors reported, 46% had recreational water exposure or drank untreated water (for example, unfiltered from a river while camping) in the days before they became ill.

These parasites and bacteria can cause illness when someone swims in and swallows water contaminated by an ill individual or infected animal. This can happen in natural water sources as well as swimming pools. **“In order to stay healthy and help other people stay healthy, you should avoid swimming when you have diarrhea, and avoid swallowing pool, river or lake water,”** says DPHHS epidemiologist Rachel Hinnenkamp.

When enjoying water this summer, DPHHS offers the following safety tips:

- Shower with soap before entering pool.
- Avoid swimming when you have diarrhea.
- Don't swallow pool, river or lake water.
- Take children on bathroom breaks every 60 minutes or check diapers every 30-60 minutes.
- Supervise swimmers, especially young and inexperienced ones. Be a role model for others.
- Learn life-saving skills such as CPR.
- Use life vests when recreating in natural waters.
- Avoid distractions such as alcohol, drugs, or cell phone use around water.

Please visit DPHHS for more [guidance on healthy swimming](#).



## Key Contacts

### Medicaid/HMK Plus Member Help Line

For questions regarding benefits copayments, or Passport to Health:

**1-800-362-8312**

[MT Healthcare Programs](#)

### Montana Relay Service

For the deaf or hard of hearing.

**1-800-253-4091 or 711**

### Montana Public Assistance Help Line

For eligibility questions.

**1-888-706-1535**

[MT PUBLIC ASSISTANCE](#)

### Transportation Center

For questions regarding travel or approval. **Call before you travel, or you may not be reimbursed.**

**1-800-292-7114.**