

FINANCIAL OPERATIONS DURING THE COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

On March 16, 2020, the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health increased the number and volume of services delivered by telephone and/or through telehealth in an effort to mitigate the spread of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in accordance with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Although in-person services are drastically reduced during this COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE), clients still must be financially screened and financial profiles must be kept up to date. The purpose of this Bulletin is to outline how to carry out financial operations during the COVID-19 PHE.

Financial Screening – Initial and Reevaluation

Currently, the Financial Screening Manual states that telephone re-evaluations are acceptable, that any missing information is to be collected at the next visit, and that a signature and documentation verifying what was reported over the phone are still required. During this COVID-19 PHE, the initial financial screening may be completed by telephone. All applicable financial screening forms can be prepared while conducting the financial screening interview.

Signatures, Verification, and Supporting Documentation

Signatures, verification, and supporting documentation are still required during the COVID-19 PHE. Verbal consent is not allowed. Prepared forms can be sent to clients and clients can send the signed forms to the clinic or send soft copies of signed forms and supporting documentation which must be saved in the Financial section of the client's chart. Examples of acceptable methods of obtaining signatures, verification, and supporting documentation include, but are not limited to:

- Scan and submit through a secure messaging system
- Fax
- Practitioner takes screenshot prior to beginning the telehealth session
- E-mail

If it is not possible to obtain a signature on the Payer Financial Information (PFI) form by mail, fax, or electronically or by mail, staff should write *Client unavailable to sign* on the signature line of the PFI; the Financial Obligation Agreement, the Lifetime Extended Signature Authorization form, and the Insurance Authorization and Assignment of Benefits form must wait for signature. Clients can provide the required signatures, verification, and supporting documentation when they come in to the program for an in-person appointment.

Please follow standard procedures and workflow for all verifying eligibility and spending down Medi-Cal share of cost.