

Subject: Health Benefits Exception Committee Updates

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MESSAGE:

Due to the rapidly evolving situation regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and staffing capacities, the Health Benefits Exception Committee (HBEC) will be updating their procedures to ensure that HBEC requests are reviewed in a timely manner so that our clients continue to have access to exception coverage. Updates will be provided, where possible, to provide specific guidance.

1.) Termination Dates for Exception Drug Coverage

To reduce in person contact between clients, workers and/or healthcare providers, the HBEC will be providing extended exceptional coverage for drug product requests which have a termination date between March 1, 2020 and August 30, 2020. Once this process has been finalized, an updated Information Bulletin will be provided with more direction.

2.) HBEC Notifications**Procedure:**

As per current processes, HBEC decisions are communicated via email to support workers or to support workers respective district offices (DO) and to our program administrators, Alberta Blue Cross (ABC) and the Alberta Dental Services Corporation (ADSC). Starting March 18, 2020, clients will no longer receive a mailed letter informing them of an exception decision through HBEC.

If a client contacts their worker or DO to determine the outcome of a HBEC exception review, the worker should:

1. Review their email or the respective DO shared email address for the HBEC notification document that is sent by HBEC program planners. This document is sent weekly and summarizes the decisions that HBEC has completed over the past week. Please note, the document will only include clients that are associated to that specific DO email address.

- a. Also search by File Number or Client as there may be instances when a DO receives an exception decision outside of the notification document.
2. If an outcome decision is not found within the DO email, confirm that the HBEC request was properly submitted to ah.healthbenefitexceptions@gov.ab.ca
3. If an outcome decision still has not been found, email ah.healthbenefitexceptions@gov.ab.ca directly and a program planner will review the status and provide a response accordingly.

3.) Incomplete HBEC requests

As communicated previously in an Information Bulletin from June 21, 2019, (HB-MEMO-2019-001) please ensure that all exception requests submitted to HBEC includes the **Request for a Health Benefit Exception Form**. Any requests missing information within this form will not be reviewed and returned to the worker/original sender. If the request is submitted directly to HBEC by a client or a healthcare provider and there is missing information, HBEC will follow the same process and return the request to the original sender.

For workers and staff who are submitting HBEC requests, please take the time to ensure the following information is included in the **Request for a Health Benefit Exception** form:

- Cardholder Name
- Name of Dependent (if applicable)
- Office/Unit/Caseload Number
- Client File Number
- Worker's Name and Contact Information or program mailbox
- Sender's Name and Contact Information (if applicable)
- Vendor name and phone number (i.e. pharmacy, optical, dental, etc.)
- Health Benefits Cardholder Signature or verbal consent obtained
- For Optical Requests, the date of the last eye exam and replacement glasses (when applicable)
 - This information is available within Central Client Directory (CCD)
- For Dental Requests, the Alberta Dental Service Corporation Review Committee denial letter

4.) HBEC Submissions

Procedure:

As per current processes, the HBEC will continue to accept and review exception requests that are submitted directly to the ah.healthbenefitexceptions@gov.ab.ca email address. Starting March 18, 2020, submissions sent via fax or through mail may not be received due to the potential of building closures or staff working from home.

If a client requests that their submission be faxed into HBEC, the worker should:

1. Confirm that all the required information is included within the submission (as per above).
2. Scan all applicable documents and send directly to the ah.healthbenefitexceptions@gov.ab.ca email address.