COVID-19 and the Public Health Emergency

Frequently Asked Questions

On January 27, 2020, Health and Human Services (HHS) the declared COVID-19 pandemic to be a public health emergency (PHE). A PHE is an official declaration made by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), a federal agency when a disease or disorder presents an emergency to public health, or that a PHE otherwise exists due to significant outbreaks of infectious disease. PHEs can last up to 90 days and can be extended at any time by HHS.

HHS continues to extend the COVID-19 PHE every 90 days. The current extension is through October 13, 2022. We will know by August 12, 2022 if the PHE is going to expire on October 13, 2022 or if we expect it to be extended again.

How will I know when the PHE has ended?
You can find a list of current PHEs on the federal PHE website. You can also stay up to date on the status of the PHE at hca.wa.gov/phe.

In January 2021, the federal government told us they would give us at least 60 days’ notice if the PHE will not be extended. We have not received notice the current extension is scheduled to end.

What is the current status of the PHE?
The current PHE is scheduled to expire on October 13, 2022. Stay up to date on Washington Apple Health (Medicaid) and the PHE at hca.wa.gov/phe.

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<tr>
<th>If the PHE expires:</th>
<th>Next 90 days:</th>
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<tr>
<td>10/18/21</td>
<td>01/16/22</td>
<td>04/16/22</td>
<td>07/15/22</td>
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<th>Then the 60-day HHS notice is:</th>
<th>Next 90 days:</th>
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<tr>
<td>08/19/21</td>
<td>11/17/21</td>
<td>02/15/22</td>
<td>05/16/22</td>
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<th>And the end of quarter of the PHE is:</th>
<th>Next 90 days:</th>
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<tr>
<td>12/31/21</td>
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<td>06/30/22</td>
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How does the PHE affect Apple Health?

Usually, a PHE doesn’t affect Apple Health eligibility. However, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act allows Apple Health to stay open for most clients for the duration of the PHE. Certain eligibility and verification factors can also be relaxed.

When the PHE ends, HCA will work with the Health Benefit Exchange (HBE) and the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to redetermine clients’ eligibility for Apple Health.

How will I know if the PHE ending will affect my or my family’s coverage?

We will tell you either by USPS mail or email if you need to take action to keep Apple Health. Not all clients will need to take action. We will give you at least one month notice to update your household’s eligibility. If Apple Health is going to end, you will get at least 10 days’ notice.

If you receive Apple Health coverage through Washington Healthplanfinder, we will try to auto-renew eligibility based on information on your application. If we cannot auto-renew coverage, we will tell you by USPS mail or email what action you need to take. If coverage ends because you did not complete your renewal, you have 90 days to complete the renewal and have coverage opened back up if you are eligible.

If you receive Apple Health through DSHS, they will send you a notice in the mail explaining what you need to do to continue your coverage. If you disagree with any decision regarding your Apple Health eligibility, you have the right to appeal by requesting a fair or administrative hearing.

Will I have a chance to update my information with current income and circumstances prior to the PHE ending?

Yes. We will tell you either by USPS mail or email if you need to take action to keep your Apple Health coverage. Not all clients will need to take action. We will give you at least one month notice to update your household’s information and you will receive at least 10 days’ notice if you are no longer eligible for Apple Health coverage.

If you are enrolled with a managed care plan (Amerigroup, Community Health Plan of Washington, Coordinated Care, Molina or UnitedHealthcare), they may contact you to help you update your eligibility.

When will CHIP and HWD premium payments restart?

Premium collection for Apple Health for Kids with premiums (CHIP) and Apple Health for Workers with Disabilities (HWD) will resume the month after the quarter in which the PHE ends. For example: If the PHE ends in October, the end of the quarter is December so premium collection resumes in January.

When the PHE ends, you will receive a letter sharing when premium requirements will resume. You will not have to pay any outstanding premiums or arrears after the PHE ends.

If I am not eligible for Apple Health, what other options will I have?

Losing Apple Health will open a special enrollment period (SEP) to purchase a qualified health plan (QHP). The American Rescue Plan (ARP) expanded the existing premium tax credit program and provides additional assistance for individuals who are approved or receiving unemployment income. For more information, visit the Washington Health Benefit Exchange’s ARP FAQ webpage.

Where can I find more information about Apple Health changes during the PHE?

You can view more information about temporary eligibility changes at our HICA COVID-19 webpage.

What if I have more questions, comments, or concerns?

Email AHEligCovid19@hca.wa.gov.