

# Improve Your Patient's Experience with Timely Access to Care

## MAKE APPOINTMENTS OR RESPOND TO PATIENTS WITHIN REGULATORY STANDARDS

**Appointment wait time standards must be met by primary care physicians (PCPs) or specialty care physicians (SCPs).** Your patients have the right to appointments within these standards.

### After-hours

**Directing patients to the appropriate after-hours care can:**

- Reduce improper use of emergency room services.
- Improve health outcomes.

Be sure to discuss after-hours and weekend access to care during your first visit with each patient and at least yearly.

After-hours access	Standard
Emergency care	Call 911 or go to the emergency room.
Urgent care	Call the provider's office 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Expect a call back from a provider within 30 minutes.

Phone response	Standard
Phone answer time at provider's office	Answer calls within 60 seconds.
Phone call back during normal business hours for non-urgent issues	Call patients back within 1 business day.



**In-office wait time for scheduled appointments must not exceed 30 minutes.**

**Check out the Provider Library on the provider portal for more details.**

Follow these steps:

1. Log on to [provider.healthnetcalifornia.com](https://provider.healthnetcalifornia.com).
2. Select Provider Library under Quick Links.
3. Select your line of business > *Provider Manual* > *Provider Oversight* > *Service and Quality Requirements* > *Access to Care and Availability Standards*.

<sup>1</sup> The Department of Health Care Services (DHCS), Department of Managed Health Care (DMHC), Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), and National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) require health plans to assess and report availability by contracted providers.

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## Access Standards

Appointments	
Appointment type	Access standard
<b>Urgent care</b>	
Urgent care appointment with primary care physician (PCP).	Within 48 hours of request.
Urgent care appointment with specialist (prior approval needed).	Within 96 hours of request.
<b>Non-urgent appointments</b>	
Non-urgent care appointment with PCP.	Within 10 business days of request.
Non-urgent care appointment with specialist.	Within 15 business days of request.
Appointment for ancillary services.	Within 15 business days of request.
<b>Behavioral health appointments</b>	
Urgent care appointment with non-physician behavioral health care provider or behavioral health care physician (psychiatrist) that does not require prior authorization.	Within 48 business hours of request.
Urgent care appointment with non-physician behavioral health care provider or behavioral health care physician (psychiatrist) that requires prior authorization.	Within 96 business hours of request.
Non-urgent initial appointment with non-physician behavioral health care provider.	Within 10 business days of request.
Non-urgent appointment with behavioral health care physician (psychiatrist).	Within 15 business days of request.
Non-urgent care follow-up appointment with non-physician mental health care provider <sup>2</sup> .	Within 10 business days of request.
<b>After-hours</b>	
<b>After-hours access</b>	<b>Access standard</b>
After-hours physician availability.	Call back within 30 minutes of call.
After-hours emergency room instruction.	Appropriate emergency instructions.
<b>Provider office phone</b>	
The survey evaluates provider compliance with the phone access standards as set forth by DHCS.	
<b>Phone access</b>	<b>Access standard</b>
Answer member calls (can be live or recorded).	Within 60 seconds.
Return member calls for non-urgent issues.	Within one business day.
<b>In-office wait time</b>	
<b>Access</b>	<b>Access standard</b>
In-office wait time for scheduled appointments (PCP and specialists).	Not to exceed 30 minutes.



### Reminder:

Interpreter services must be available at the time of the appointment.

To request interpreter services for members, contact:  
**800-929-9224**

<sup>2</sup>APL 22-007 Monitoring and Annual Reporting Changes due to SB 221, AB 457 and Amendments to Rule 1300.67.2.2.