



G Non-Emergency Transportation (NET) Program

The Non-Emergency Transportation (NET) Program provides necessary non-ambulance transportation services to Medicaid recipients. Medicaid pays for rides to a doctor or clinic for medical care or treatment that is covered by Medicaid.

The NET Program has the responsibility to ensure that non-emergency transportation services are provided in the manner described below:

- Similar in scope and duration state-wide, although there will be some variation depending on resources available in a particular geographical location of the state
- Consistent with the best interest of recipients
- Appropriate to available services, geographic location and limitations of recipients
- Prompt, cost-effective, and efficient

Coordinators in the NET Program have the following responsibilities:

- Determine availability of free transportation, including recipient's vehicle, transportation by relative or friend, or volunteer services. Medicaid will not reimburse services if recipient has access to free transportation, except in the case of evident hardship (determined by Alabama Medicaid).
- Establish eligibility (Medicaid does not reimburse for non-eligible transportation services)
- Collect and submit medical documentation for medical necessity review by Medicaid medical staff for transportation services
- Determine the least costly means of transportation services
- Coordinate in-state and out-of-state commercial bus, train, or air transportation; Medicaid may approve the use of commercial buses, trains or airplanes for in-state and out-of-state use for Medicaid recipients in special circumstances.

Prior Authorization for NET Program

All payments for NET services require prior authorization with the exception of the services listed in Chapter 8, Ambulance, Section 8.2.2, Non-Emergency Ambulance Services, and those services requiring urgent care.

Urgent care is defined as medical care that is required after normal business hours. Requests for reimbursements for Non-Emergency Transportation as a result of urgent care must be made the first business day after the need for transportation occurs.

Medicaid may issue a travel reimbursement for the cost of fare to recipients who are able to ride public transportation to medical services. Recipients should use public transportation whenever possible. Coordinators should determine that public transportation does not meet the recipient's needs before Medicaid authorizes other modes of transportation.

Recipients who request out-of-state transportation to medical facilities must have a physician send Medicaid a physician's statement that justifies the need for out-of-state services and assures that such services cannot be obtained in-state.

G.1 Benefits and Limitations

This section describes program-specific benefits and limitations. Refer to Chapter 3, Verifying Recipient Eligibility, for general benefit information and limitations. Refer to Chapter 7, Understanding Your Rights and Responsibilities as a Provider, for general criteria on Medical Necessity/ Medically Necessary Care.

This section explains benefits the NET Program offers to eligible recipients and limitations of NET services.

Escorts

An escort is an individual who is not an employee of a NET transporter and whose presence is required to assist a recipient during transport while at the place of treatment. An escort is typically a relative, guardian, or volunteer. Only one escort is covered per recipient in need, and the recipient must prove an identifiable need for the escort.

Medicaid allows escorts for recipients under the age of 21. Escort Services are utilized in-state or out-of-state for recipients over 21 years of age. A recipient age 21 or older that requests an escort must submit a medical certification statement before Medicaid will reimburse the claim. The certification must document that the recipient has a physical or mental disability that would require assistance, such as the following:

- Blindness
- Deafness
- Mental retardation
- Mental illness
- Physical handicap to a degree that personal assistance is necessary

Covered Services

The NET Program may be used for the following medical services:

- Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT)
- Inpatient hospital care
- Outpatient hospital care
- Physician services
- Diagnostic devices (for example, x-ray and laboratory)

- Clinic services (family planning, rural health, and community mental health)
- Dental services
- Orthotic and prosthetic services
- Eye care
- Transportation provided by relatives or individuals living in the same household with the Medicaid recipient
- Transportation provided in the Medicaid recipient's vehicle or relative's vehicle

NOTE:

Medicaid reimburses transportation service to a physician's office through the NET Program only when prior authorized.

NET Resources

NET services include the following resources when the recipient requires medical care and has no other transportation resources. Coordinators must use the most inexpensive mode of transportation that meets the recipient's needs.

- Automobile (volunteer driver) - Medicaid encourages multiple passenger transportation. Volunteer drivers can be reimbursed for transport from the recipient's home (or place of admission or discharge) and return, unless Medicaid determines paying for additional mileage is the most economical transportation.
- Minibus
- Wheelchair vans - Escorts are allowed for wheelchair vans when prior approved by Medicaid.
- Bus (commercial or city transit) – This service may be provided in-state or out-of-state.
- Airplane transportation
- Train service
- Escort services for minibus, automobile, commercial bus, train, and airplane transportation - Escort services for commercial bus, train, and airplane transportation are reimbursed for the actual cost of the bus, train, or plane ticket.
- Meals and lodging for the recipient and one escort, when required, during overnight travel

Meals and Lodging

When overnight travel is necessary, Medicaid pays for meals and lodging for the recipient and one escort (when authorized). Medicaid must receive receipts or confirmation of expenses before reimbursement can be made. Reimbursement will not exceed \$50 per person, per day.

Non-Covered Services

The NET program does not cover the following services:

- Any travel when the Medicaid recipient is not an occupant of the vehicle, unless that would be the most economical transportation available
- Meals and lodging for volunteer drivers
- The use of supplies such as oxygen and intravenous fluids
- Transportation for any services other than those covered by Medicaid
- Transportation provided after the death of a Medicaid recipient
- Minibus or wheelchair van travel 30 miles outside the state line
- Services for which prior approval is required but is not obtained
- Services that are not medically necessary or that are not provided in compliance with the provision of this chapter

G.2 Frequently Asked Questions

This section is intended to help NET program providers answer questions frequently asked by Medicaid recipients.

What is Non-Emergency Transportation?

Medicaid's NET program is set up to help pay for rides to and from a doctor's office, clinic, or other place for medical care that can be planned ahead of time. This ride can be in a car, bus, or van and can be given by a friend, neighbor, or family member. You can also get a ride on a city bus or from a group in your town or area.

Who can get a ride?

For Medicaid to pay for a ride, the person who is going to the doctor or clinic must be covered by Medicaid for the visit they are going to make and should be approved for the ride ahead of time.

How does the program work?

For Medicaid to pay for a ride, you (or someone who is helping you) will need to call Medicaid's toll-free number at 1-800-362-1504. When you call, the operator will ask you for some information to make sure you are covered by Medicaid and also about your need for a ride. This information will be used to decide if Medicaid can pay for your ride. The NET hotline is open from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on state holidays.

What do I do?

You must first try to get a ride on your own. If you are approved for a ride, you will be told about people or groups in your areas who can help you get a ride for little or no cost.

If the people or groups in your community who usually give you a ride cannot give you a ride, then call the toll-free hotline to speak to an operator. The operator will try to help you. In some cases, a special Medicaid worker may work with you if you have to go for a lot of medical care or treatment (like kidney dialysis or cancer treatments).

What if I have an emergency?

If you have an emergency, call 911 (or the emergency number in your town) to reach an ambulance or paramedics who can help you. Medicaid covers ambulance rides when there is an emergency, such as when someone stops breathing or has been badly hurt.

What do I do if I have a medical problem that can't wait?

A medical problem that must be treated right away, but does not cause your life to be in danger is called an "urgent" medical problem. Broken arms, a bad cut, a baby with a bad earache, or mild chest pains are examples of "urgent" problems.

If you have to pay someone to take you to the emergency room or doctor's office after hours because of an "urgent" problem, you need to call Medicaid's toll-free hotline as soon as possible after the visit to apply for payment. Medicaid pays for the ride to the emergency room only if the visit is for an "urgent" medical problem. Medicaid does not pay for a ride to the emergency room for a problem that can wait until the doctor's office or clinic is open.

How much will Medicaid pay for a ride?

Medicaid pays what is reasonable and necessary to make sure you get the medical care you need. If you have questions about this, ask your operator when you call the toll-free number.

What do I do if I have to pay for a ride to see the doctor on the weekend?

Call the toll-free number the next working day after the ride. Tell the operator where you went for care and why you need help in paying for your ride. Depending on what happened, you might be able to get payment for a ride you had to pay for.

Will Medicaid pay for someone to go with me?

Medicaid pays for an escort for a child or for an adult who is unable to go alone because of a physical or mental disability.

How many rides will Medicaid pay for?

Medicaid pays for rides only to a doctor or clinic for medical care or treatment that is covered by Medicaid. For example, once you use up all of your doctor visits for the year, Medicaid will not pay for rides to any doctor visits.

How will Medicaid pay for my ride?

If your ride is approved, Medicaid will send your reimbursement through an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT). Once your transportation request to a Medicaid covered service/provider has been verified by a NET worker, your reimbursement will be loaded to an EBT (plastic) card. The EBT card can only be used at stores that display the Quest logo for cash withdrawal or cash purchase transactions.

If you have been approved for transportation reimbursements, an EBT card personalized with your information, along with a training brochure with detailed information on how to use the system, will be mailed to you. The EBT card must be PIN activated **before** it can be used to make cash withdrawals or cash purchases.

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