

Appointment availability and **after-hours access requirements**

To ensure members receive care in a timely manner, primary care providers (PCPs), specialty providers and behavioral health providers must maintain the following appointment availability and PCP after hours access standards.

Appointment availability requirements

Wellpoint is dedicated to arranging timely access to care for our members. Our ability to provide quality access depends on the accessibility of network providers. We evaluated regulatory/accreditation standards from the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, the Texas Department of Insurance, and the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA), and we adopted the most stringent standards among the three. These standards apply for all Medicaid (STAR, STAR+PLUS, and STAR Kids) and CHIP members (unless otherwise specified), and providers are required to adhere to them.

Standard name	Wellpoint requirement
Emergency services	Immediately upon member presentation at the service delivery site, including at non-network and out-of-area facilities
Urgent care	Within 24 hours
Post-emergency room or hospital discharge (nonbehavioral health)	Within 14 days of discharge
Routine primary care	Within 14 days
Routine specialty care	Within 3 weeks
Preventive health: adult 21 or older	Within 90 days
Preventive health: child, new Medicaid member	For new members, birth through age 20, overdue or upcoming well-child checkups (including Texas Health Steps) should be offered as soon as practicable (and no later than 90 days after enrollment).
Preventive health: child less than 6 months old	Within 14 days
Preventive health: age 6 months through 20 years	Within 60 days
Prenatal care — initial visit	Within 14 days
Prenatal care — high-risk or third trimester — initial visit	Within 5 days or immediately if an emergency exists
Prenatal care — after initial visit	Based on the provider's treatment plan
Behavioral health	
Behavioral health (BH), nonlife-threatening emergency care	Within 6 hours (NCQA)
Post-hospital discharge (BH)	Within 7 days of discharge (for missed appointments, provider must contact member within 24 hours to reschedule appointment)
BH, urgent care	Within 24 hours
BH, routine care — initial visit	The earlier of 10 business days (NCQA) or 14 calendar days
BH, routine care — follow-up visits	Within 3 weeks

After-hours access requirements for PCPs

To ensure continuous 24-hour coverage, PCPs must maintain **one** of the following arrangements for member contact after normal business hours. One of the following must apply:

Standard	Wellpoint requirement
After normal business hours recording	The office telephone is answered by a recording in both English and Spanish. The recorded message(s) should direct the member to call another number to reach the PCP or another provider or network designated by the PCP. Another recording is not acceptable — A person must be available to answer the designated provider's telephone.
After normal business hours calls transferred	The office telephone is transferred to another location where the person answering calls must be able to contact the PCP or a designated Wellpoint network medical practitioner who can return the call within 30 minutes.
After normal business hours answering service	The office telephone is answered by an answering service equipped to contact the PCP or another designated network medical practitioner. All calls handled by an answering service must be returned within 30 minutes. The answering service must have both English and Spanish language capability.

The following telephone answering procedures are not acceptable:

- Answering the office telephone only during office hours
- Answering the office telephone after hours with a recording telling members to leave a message
- Answering the office telephone after hours with a recording directing members to go to the ER for needed services
- Returning after-hours calls outside of a 30-minute time frame

Please note:

- Wellpoint will record an after-hours message in Spanish for any provider practice that would like assistance. To learn more about recording an after-hours message in Spanish, please reach out to your Wellpoint Provider Experience representative.
- If you do not currently offer after-hours access (before 8 a.m. and after 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday and any weekend/holiday appointments), we encourage you to consider doing so to improve accessibility. Appointments scheduled at these times may be billed using the appropriate after-hours CPT® code for an additional reimbursement. If you do offer after-hours access, we encourage you to keep some of those appointments open for our members.

Providers may not use discriminatory practices such as demonstrating a preference to other insured or private-pay patients (including separate waiting rooms, hours of operation, or appointment days). Wellpoint routinely monitors providers' adherence to access to care standards.



Contact your Provider Experience associate or refer to the *Contact Us* section at the bottom of our provider website for up-to-date contact information.

Learn more about Wellpoint programs
provider.wellpoint.com/tx/

