



How to Request Expedited Processing of Medical Assistance Applications:

A Guide for Consumers

Overview

Typically it takes up to 30 days to get a decision once a Medical Assistance (MA) application is submitted. However, if the applicant is experiencing a medical emergency, the County Assistance Office (CAO) can speed up the proceeding of the application. This is known as requesting “expedited processing” of a MA application.

The rules governing this process can be found in the Department of Human Services (DHS) MA Eligibility Handbook, [Section 303.13, Speeding Up an Application in a Medical Emergency](#).

To Request Expedited Processing of an MA Application:

1. Write "Medical Emergency - Please Expedite" on the application form or in the notes section of the COMPASS application, if applying online. An applicant may also call the County Assistance Office (CAO) after submitting the MA application, and verbally request expedited processing. However, it is almost always better to put the request in writing.

2. Document the emergency condition. An applicant can verify an immediate need for surgery, medication, or other medical procedure/device by providing either written documentation or telephone verification from the medical provider.

Written documentation from a medical provider may include: 1) a completed DHS form (e.g., the [Employability Assessment Form](#) or the [Health Sustaining Medication Assessment Form](#)); 2) a note on the doctor’s letterhead or prescription pad explaining the medical need; or 3) notes from the caseworker’s phone conversation with the provider.

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Where a CAO caseworker is unsure whether the applicant's situation is an emergency, he or she should treat it as an emergency until receiving verification otherwise. If necessary, the caseworker should assist the applicant in obtaining verification of the medical emergency, including requesting proof of the emergency medical condition from the applicant's doctor or other appropriate providers.

If the caseworker has all proof needed for deciding on eligibility for the applicant with the medical emergency (e.g. proof of income, resources, residence, etc.), they should make a decision right away. Caseworkers should not hold off on the decision while waiting for verification documents for any other household members who are applying along with the applicant.

Once the caseworker has made an eligibility decision, the applicant should be made aware immediately by a phone call from the caseworker. The caseworker must also mail a notice of eligibility.

Example of a Caseworker should Expedite the Processing of a MA Application:

Mr. Jones submits his MA application on Wednesday, January 2. He provides verification from a doctor that he has surgery scheduled for Thursday, January 10, to correct a medical condition. The medical condition is not life threatening now, but it will become so if it is not treated. His surgeon refuses to perform the surgery without proof that Mr. Jones has medical coverage.

The CAO caseworker contacts Mr. Jones by telephone on January 2 and requests proof of Mr. Jones's income and resources. Mr. Jones turns in the proof on January 3. The CAO worker processes the application and sends Mr. Jones a notice of eligibility for MA on January 3. The worker also calls Mr. Jones to tell him of the decision the same day.

For More Information

Applicants or advocates who experience problems having a MA application expedited should call the Pennsylvania Health Law Project's statewide Toll-Free Helpline at 1-800-274-3258. Visit www.phlp.org for more information about getting help from PHLP.