

# Provider Access and Availability Standards

To ensure medical services are available to our members on a timely basis, Primary Care Provider (PCP), behavioral health, and specialist appointment availability standards for Meridian and its family of plans are noted in the chart. This includes Meridian Medicaid Plan, YouthCare, our Medicaid foster care plan, Ambetter, Wellcare, and Wellcare By Meridian D-SNP.

## 1. Medicaid Appointment and Timely Access to Care Standards

### Primary Care Appointments

| Type of Care/Appointment                        | Length of Wait Time                                     |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Preventive/Routine Care (Child < 6 months)      | Within two (2) weeks of request                         |
| Preventive/Routine Care (Child ≥ 6 months)      | Within five (5) weeks of request                        |
| Preventive/Routine Care (Adult)                 | Within five (5) weeks of request                        |
| Urgent/Non-Emergent (Medically Necessary) Care  | Within one (1) business day of request                  |
| Non-Urgent/Non-Emergent Conditions              | Within three (3) weeks of request                       |
| Initial Prenatal w/o Problems (First Trimester) | Within two (2) weeks of request                         |
| Prenatal (Second Trimester)                     | Within one (1) week of request                          |
| Prenatal (Third Trimester)                      | Within three (3) calendar days of request               |
| Office Wait Time                                | Within thirty (30) minutes                              |
| Different Hours for Member Plans                | No, hours must be the same for all members and patients |

### Behavioral Health Appointments

| Type of Care/Appointment         | Length of Wait Time                                     |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Life-Threatening Emergency       | Immediate admittance or referred to the Emergency Room  |
| Non-Life-Threatening Emergency   | Within six (6) hours of request                         |
| Urgent Care Visit                | Within forty-eight (48) hours of request                |
| Initial Visit for Routine Care   | Within ten (10) business days of request                |
| Follow-Up Visit for Routine Care | Within twenty (20) business days of request             |
| Office Wait Time                 | Within thirty (30) minutes                              |
| Different Hours for Member Plans | No, hours must be the same for all members and patients |

### Specialty Care Appointments

| Type of Care/Appointment                       | Length of Wait Time                                     |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Preventive/Routine Care (Child < 6 months)     | Within two (2) weeks of request                         |
| Preventive/Routine Care (Child ≥ 6 months)     | Within five (5) weeks of request                        |
| Preventive/Routine Care (Adult)                | Within five (5) weeks of request                        |
| Urgent/Non-Emergent (Medically Necessary) Care | Within one (1) business day of request                  |
| Non-Urgent/Non-Emergent Conditions             | Within three (3) weeks of request                       |
| Office Wait Time                               | Within thirty (30) minutes                              |
| Different Hours for Member Plans               | No, hours must be the same for all members and patients |

Medical coverage 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

## After-Hours Requirements

All participating provider agreements with PCPs, specialists, and behavioral health providers require physicians to provide members with access to care 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Acceptable after-hours access mechanisms include:

- Answering service
- On-call pager/cellular connection
- Call forwarding to practitioner's home/other location
- Published after-hours telephone number and recorded voice message directing patients to a practitioner for urgent and non-life-threatening conditions.

Acceptable after-hours answering machine instructions include:

| Primary Care (PCP)                                            | Behavioral Health (BH)*                                                                                               |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Answering system with option to page physician                | Answering system provides a direct transfer or paging option to a Behavioral Health practitioner or on-call clinician |
| Provides number to access physician live or answering service | Answering system directs or directly connects callers to 24-hour crisis services                                      |
| Nurse with access to a physician                              | Advice Nurse with access to physician                                                                                 |
| Pages provides once message is left                           | Pages provider once message is left                                                                                   |
| Please hold or Press # for Physician Exchange                 | Please hold or Press # for an answering service                                                                       |

*\*New NCQA standard, effective July 2026*

Note that the following options are **NOT** acceptable for after-hours instructions:

- An answering machine that only takes a message
- Message provides a phone number, page, email, text, or voicemail without direct connection
- Recommending that members call during business hours
- Recommending member go to an urgent care center or Emergency Room

There must be a method to talk to a physician 24 hours a day, seven days a week regarding after-hours care for urgent or non-life-threatening conditions, as well as instructions to call 911 or go to the Emergency Department in the event of a life-threatening condition or serious trauma.

Messages **should not** instruct members to obtain treatment at the Emergency Department for non-life-threatening conditions. The member must be able to leave a message for an on-call doctor, speak with an on-call doctor, or be forwarded to an on-call doctor.

After-Hours Voice Message **MUST** contain ONE of the following:

- Message forwards to on-call practitioner
- Message forwards to an answering service
- Message gives the on-call practitioner's number
- Message gives the on-call practitioner's pager number
- Message refers patient to another office, practitioner, or on-call service

## 2. YouthCare Appointment and Timely Access to Care Standards

| Primary Care Appointments                       |                                                         |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Type of Care/Appointment                        | Length of Wait Time                                     |
| Preventive/Routine Care (Child < 6 months)      | Within two (2) weeks of request                         |
| Preventive/Routine Care (Child ≥ 6 months)      | Within five (5) weeks of request                        |
| Urgent/Non-Emergent (Medically Necessary) Care  | Within one (1) business day of request                  |
| Non-Urgent/Non-Emergent Conditions              | Within three (3) weeks of request                       |
| Initial Prenatal w/o Problems (First Trimester) | Within two (2) weeks of request                         |
| Prenatal (Second Trimester)                     | Within one (1) week of request                          |
| Prenatal (Third Trimester)                      | Within three (3) calendar days of request               |
| Office Wait Time                                | Within thirty (30) minutes                              |
| Different Hours for Member Plans                | No, hours must be the same for all members and patients |

| Behavioral Health Appointments   |                                                         |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Type of Care/Appointment         | Length of Wait Time                                     |
| Life-Threatening Emergency       | Immediate admittance or referred to the Emergency Room  |
| Non-Life-Threatening Emergency   | Within six (6) hours of request                         |
| Urgent Care Visit                | Within forty-eight (48) hours of request                |
| Initial Visit for Routine Care   | Within ten (10) business days of request                |
| Follow-Up Visit for Routine Care | Within twenty (20) business days of request             |
| Office Wait Time                 | Within thirty (30) minutes                              |
| Different Hours for Member Plans | No, hours must be the same for all members and patients |

| Specialty Care Appointments                    |                                                         |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Type of Care/Appointment                       | Length of Wait Time                                     |
| Preventive/Routine Care (Child < 6 months)     | Within two (2) weeks of request                         |
| Preventive/Routine Care (Child ≥ 6 months)     | Within five (5) weeks of request                        |
| Urgent/Non-Emergent (Medically Necessary) Care | Within one (1) business day of request                  |
| Non-Urgent/Non-Emergent Conditions             | Within three (3) weeks of request                       |
| Office Wait Time                               | Within thirty (30) minutes                              |
| Different Hours for Member Plans               | No, hours must be the same for all members and patients |

Medical coverage 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

## After-Hours Requirements

All participating provider agreements with PCPs, specialists, and behavioral health providers require physicians to provide members with access to care 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Acceptable after-hours access mechanisms include:

- Answering service
- On-call pager/cellular connection
- Call forwarding to practitioner's home/other location
- Published after-hours telephone number and recorded voice message directing patients to a practitioner for urgent and non-life-threatening conditions.

Acceptable after-hours answering machine instructions include:

| Primary Care (PCP)                                            | Behavioral Health (BH)*                                                                                               |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Answering system with option to page physician                | Answering system provides a direct transfer or paging option to a Behavioral Health practitioner or on-call clinician |
| Provides number to access physician live or answering service | Answering system directs or directly connects callers to 24-hour crisis services                                      |
| Nurse with access to a physician                              | Advice Nurse with access to physician                                                                                 |
| Pages provides once message is left                           | Pages provider once message is left                                                                                   |
| Please hold or Press # for Physician Exchange                 | Please hold or Press # for an answering service                                                                       |

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Note that the following options are **NOT** acceptable for after-hours instructions:

- An answering machine that only takes a message
- Message provides a phone number, page, email, text, or voicemail without direct connection
- Recommending that members call during business hours
- Recommending member go to an urgent care center or Emergency Room

There must be a method to talk to a physician 24 hours a day, seven days a week regarding after-hours care for urgent or non-life-threatening conditions, as well as instructions to call 911 or go to the Emergency Department in the event of a life-threatening condition or serious trauma.

Messages **should not** instruct members to obtain treatment at the Emergency Department for non-life-threatening conditions. The member must be able to leave a message for an on-call doctor, speak with an on-call doctor, or be forwarded to an on-call doctor.

After-Hours Voice Message **MUST** contain ONE of the following:

- Message forwards to on-call practitioner
- Message forwards to an answering service
- Message gives the on-call practitioner's number
- Message gives the on-call practitioner's pager number
- Message refers patient to another office, practitioner, or on-call service

### 3. Ambetter Appointment and Timely Access to Care Standards

| Primary Care Appointments                      |                                                         |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Type of Care/Appointment                       | Length of Wait Time                                     |
| Preventive/Routine Care                        | Within fifteen (15) calendar days of request            |
| Urgent/Non-Emergent (Medically Necessary) Care | Within twenty-four (24) hours of request                |
| Sick Care                                      | Within twenty-four (24) hours of request                |
| Office Wait Time                               | Within thirty (30) minutes                              |
| Different Hours for Member Plans               | No, hours must be the same for all members and patients |

| Behavioral Health Appointments   |                                                         |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Type of Care/Appointment         | Length of Wait Time                                     |
| Life-Threatening Emergency       | Immediate admittance or referred to the Emergency Room  |
| Non-Life-Threatening Emergency   | Within six (6) hours of request                         |
| Urgent Care Visit                | Within forty-eight (48) hours of request                |
| Initial Visit for Routine Care   | Within ten (10) business days of request                |
| Follow-Up Visit for Routine Care | Within ten (10) business days of request                |
| Office Wait Time                 | Within thirty (30) minutes                              |
| Different Hours for Member Plans | No, hours must be the same for all members and patients |

| Specialty Care Appointments      |                                                         |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Type of Care/Appointment         | Length of Wait Time                                     |
| Preventive/Routine Care          | Within thirty (30) calendar days of request             |
| Urgent Care Visit                | Within forty-eight (48) hours of request                |
| Office Wait Time                 | Within thirty (30) minutes                              |
| Different Hours for Member Plans | No, hours must be the same for all members and patients |

Medical coverage 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

## After-Hours Requirements

All participating provider agreements with PCPs, specialists, and behavioral health providers require physicians to provide members with access to care 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Acceptable after-hours access mechanisms include:

- Answering service
- On-call pager/cellular connection
- Call forwarding to practitioner's home/other location
- Published after-hours telephone number and recorded voice message directing patients to a practitioner for urgent and non-life-threatening conditions.

Acceptable after-hours answering machine instructions include:

| Primary Care (PCP)                                            | Behavioral Health (BH)*                                                                                               |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Answering system with option to page physician                | Answering system provides a direct transfer or paging option to a Behavioral Health practitioner or on-call clinician |
| Provides number to access physician live or answering service | Answering system directs or directly connects callers to 24-hour crisis services                                      |
| Nurse with access to a physician                              | Advice Nurse with access to physician                                                                                 |
| Pages provides once message is left                           | Pages provider once message is left                                                                                   |
| Please hold or Press # for Physician Exchange                 | Please hold or Press # for an answering service                                                                       |

*\*New NCQA standard, effective July 2026*

Note that the following options are **NOT** acceptable for after-hours instructions:

- An answering machine that only takes a message
- Message provides a phone number, page, email, text, or voicemail without direct connection
- Recommending that members call during business hours
- Recommending member go to an urgent care center or Emergency Room

There must be a method to talk to a physician 24 hours a day, seven days a week regarding after-hours care for urgent or non-life-threatening conditions, as well as instructions to call 911 or go to the Emergency Department in the event of a life-threatening condition or serious trauma.

Messages **should not** instruct members to obtain treatment at the Emergency Department for non-life-threatening conditions. The member must be able to leave a message for an on-call doctor, speak with an on-call doctor, or be forwarded to an on-call doctor.

After-Hours Voice Message **MUST** contain ONE of the following:

- Message forwards to on-call practitioner
- Message forwards to an answering service
- Message gives the on-call practitioner's number
- Message gives the on-call practitioner's pager number
- Message refers patient to another office, practitioner, or on-call service

#### 4. Wellcare Appointment and Timely Access to Care Standards

##### Primary Care Appointments

| Type of Care/Appointment                       | Length of Wait Time                                     |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Preventive/Routine Care                        | Within thirty (30) business days of request             |
| Urgent/Non-Emergent (Medically Necessary) Care | Within twenty-four (24) hours of request                |
| Sick Care                                      | Within seven (7) business days of request               |
| Office Wait Time                               | Within thirty (30) minutes                              |
| Different Hours for Member Plans               | No, hours must be the same for all members and patients |

##### Behavioral Health Appointments

| Type of Care/Appointment         | Length of Wait Time                                     |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Life-Threatening Emergency       | Immediate admittance or referred to the Emergency Room  |
| Non-Life-Threatening Emergency   | Within six (6) hours of request                         |
| Urgent Care Visit                | Within forty-eight (48) hours of request                |
| Sick/Non-Urgent Care             | Within seven (7) business days of request               |
| Initial Visit for Routine Care   | Within ten (10) business days of request                |
| Follow-Up Visit for Routine Care | Within thirty (30) business days of request             |
| Office Wait Time                 | Within thirty (30) minutes                              |
| Different Hours for Member Plans | No, hours must be the same for all members and patients |

##### Specialty Care Appointments

| Type of Care/Appointment         | Length of Wait Time                                     |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Preventive/Routine Care          | Within thirty (30) calendar days of request             |
| Urgent Care Visit                | Within twenty-four (24) hours of request                |
| Office Wait Time                 | Within thirty (30) minutes                              |
| Different Hours for Member Plans | No, hours must be the same for all members and patients |

Medical coverage 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

## After-Hours Requirements

All participating provider agreements with PCPs, specialists, and behavioral health providers require physicians to provide members with access to care 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Acceptable after-hours access mechanisms include:

- Answering service
- On-call pager/cellular connection
- Call forwarding to practitioner's home/other location
- Published after-hours telephone number and recorded voice message directing patients to a practitioner for urgent and non-life-threatening conditions.

Acceptable after-hours answering machine instructions include:

| Primary Care (PCP)                                            | Behavioral Health (BH)*                                                                                               |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Answering system with option to page physician                | Answering system provides a direct transfer or paging option to a Behavioral Health practitioner or on-call clinician |
| Provides number to access physician live or answering service | Answering system directs or directly connects callers to 24-hour crisis services                                      |
| Nurse with access to a physician                              | Advice Nurse with access to physician                                                                                 |
| Pages provides once message is left                           | Pages provider once message is left                                                                                   |
| Please hold or Press # for Physician Exchange                 | Please hold or Press # for an answering service                                                                       |

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Note that the following options are **NOT** acceptable for after-hours instructions:

- An answering machine that only takes a message
- Message provides a phone number, page, email, text, or voicemail without direct connection
- Recommending that members call during business hours
- Recommending member go to an urgent care center or Emergency Room

There must be a method to talk to a physician 24 hours a day, seven days a week regarding after-hours care for urgent or non-life-threatening conditions, as well as instructions to call 911 or go to the Emergency Department in the event of a life-threatening condition or serious trauma.

Messages **should not** instruct members to obtain treatment at the Emergency Department for non-life-threatening conditions. The member must be able to leave a message for an on-call doctor, speak with an on-call doctor, or be forwarded to an on-call doctor.

After-Hours Voice Message **MUST** contain ONE of the following:

- Message forwards to on-call practitioner
- Message forwards to an answering service
- Message gives the on-call practitioner's number
- Message gives the on-call practitioner's pager number
- Message refers patient to another office, practitioner, or on-call service

## 5. Wellcare By Meridian (D SNP) Appointment and Timely Access to Care Standards

| Primary Care Appointments                                |                                                         |
|----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Type of Care/Appointment                                 | Length of Wait Time                                     |
| Preventive/Routine Care                                  | Within twenty-five (25) business days of request        |
| Urgent/Non-Emergent (Medically Necessary) Care           | Within one (1) business days of request                 |
| Non-Urgent/Non-Emergent Conditions (Medically Necessary) | Within seven (7) business days of request               |
| Non-Urgent/Non-Emergent Conditions                       | Within three (3) weeks of request                       |
| Initial Prenatal w/o Problems (First Trimester)          | Within two (2) weeks of request                         |
| Prenatal (Second Trimester)                              | Within one (1) week of request                          |
| Prenatal (Third Trimester)                               | Within three (3) calendar days of request               |
| Office Wait Time                                         | Within thirty (30) minutes                              |
| Different Hours for Member Plans?                        | No, hours must be the same for all members and patients |

| Behavioral Health Appointments    |                                                         |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Type of Care/Appointment          | Length of Wait Time                                     |
| Life-Threatening Emergency        | Immediate admittance or referred to the Emergency Room  |
| Non-Life-Threatening Emergency    | Within six (6) hours of request                         |
| Urgent Care Visit                 | Within forty-eight (48) hours of request                |
| Initial Visit for Routine Care    | Within ten (10) business days of request                |
| Follow-Up Visit for Routine Care  | Within twenty (20) business days of request             |
| Office Wait Time                  | Within thirty (30) minutes                              |
| Different Hours for Member Plans? | No, hours must be the same for all members and patients |

| Specialty Care Appointments                                  |                                                         |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Type of Care/Appointment                                     | Length of Wait Time                                     |
| Routine Care (Adult)                                         | Within twenty-five (25) business days of request        |
| Urgent/Non-Emergent (Medically Necessary) Care               | Within one (1) business days of request                 |
| Non-Urgent/Non-Emergent Conditions (Medically Necessary)     | Within seven (7) business days of request               |
| Non-Urgent/Non-Emergent Conditions (Not Medically Necessary) | Within three (3) weeks of request                       |
| Office Wait Time                                             | Within thirty (30) minutes                              |
| Different Hours for Member Plans?                            | No, hours must be the same for all members and patients |

Medical coverage 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

## After-Hours Requirements

All participating provider agreements with PCPs, specialists, and behavioral health providers require physicians to provide members with access to care 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Acceptable after-hours access mechanisms include:

- Answering service
- On-call pager/cellular connection
- Call forwarding to practitioner's home/other location
- Published after-hours telephone number and recorded voice message directing patients to a practitioner for urgent and non-life-threatening conditions.

Acceptable after-hours answering machine instructions include:

| Primary Care (PCP)                                            | Behavioral Health (BH)*                                                                                               |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Answering system with option to page physician                | Answering system provides a direct transfer or paging option to a Behavioral Health practitioner or on-call clinician |
| Provides number to access physician live or answering service | Answering system directs or directly connects callers to 24-hour crisis services                                      |
| Nurse with access to a physician                              | Advice Nurse with access to physician                                                                                 |
| Pages provides once message is left                           | Pages provider once message is left                                                                                   |
| Please hold or Press # for Physician Exchange                 | Please hold or Press # for an answering service                                                                       |

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Note that the following options are **NOT** acceptable for after-hours instructions:

- An answering machine that only takes a message
- Message provides a phone number, page, email, text, or voicemail without direct connection
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- Recommending member go to an urgent care center or Emergency Room

There must be a method to talk to a physician 24 hours a day, seven days a week regarding after-hours care for urgent or non-life-threatening conditions, as well as instructions to call 911 or go to the Emergency Department in the event of a life-threatening condition or serious trauma.

Messages **should not** instruct members to obtain treatment at the Emergency Department for non-life-threatening conditions. The member must be able to leave a message for an on-call doctor, speak with an on-call doctor, or be forwarded to an on-call doctor.

After-Hours Voice Message **MUST** contain ONE of the following:

- Message forwards to on-call practitioner
- Message forwards to an answering service
- Message gives the on-call practitioner's number
- Message gives the on-call practitioner's pager number
- Message refers patient to another office, practitioner, or on-call service