BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD OF NEBRASKA

APPOINTMENT AVAILABILITY/AFTER HOURS ACCESS: Applies to Primary Care Physicians Only

STANDARD	MET	NOT MET
Patients with urgent illnesses shall be seen within 24 hours.	From staff interview, review of appointment/scheduling book, and/or policies and procedures, the patient is seen by the physician or with another practitioner within the same practice for urgent care needs, e.g., persistent diarrhea, vomiting, fever > 102, shortness of breath, within 24 hours.	The office/facility has made no provisions to meet the standard as described in the "Met" column.
Patients with non-urgent symptomatic, routine care needs shall be seen within 5 days.	From staff interview, review of appointment/scheduling book, and/or policies and procedures, the patient is seen by the physician or with another practitioner within the same practice for non-urgent care needs, e.g., sore throat, joint pain, headaches, chronic conditions within 5 days.	The office/facility has made no provisions to meet the standard as described in the "Met" column.
Patients with preventive health care needs shall be able to obtain an appointment within 30 days.	From staff interview, review of appointment/scheduling book, and/or policies and procedures, patients with preventive health care needs, e.g., annual physical exam, pap, well child visit, are able to obtain an appointment with the physician or with another practitioner within the same practice within 30 days.	Patients are not able to obtain an appointment as described in the "Met" column.
Patients with emergency care needs that are not life threatening shall be evaluated as soon as the patient can be transported to the office.	From staff interview, review of appointment/scheduling book, and/or policies and procedures, patients with Emergency care needs that are not life threatening, e.g., lacerations are evaluated by the physician or by another practitioner within the same practice as soon as the patient can be transported to the office.	Patients with emergency care needs that are not life threatening are not evaluated as described in the "Met" column.
Primary Care Physicians will provide 24 hour access to care for patients.	The reviewer will conduct an after hours audit by calling the office after hours. "Acceptable" responses are as follows: 1. Physician or covering physician/practitioner available. 2. Answering system with the option to page the physician or covering physician/practitioner. 3. An advice nurse with access to the PCP or the covering physician/practitioner. 4. Answering machine that indicates an emergency telephone number that the patient can call and meets at least one (1) of the above listed acceptable criteria (1, 2, or 3).	When the reviewer conducts the after hours telephone audit, there is no response as described in the "Met" column. Unacceptable responses are as follows: 1. Answering machine that only takes a message. 2. A message that recommends calling during business hours. 3. A message that recommends seeking care through ER or an Urgent Care Center. 4. No answer after 10 rings. 5. An advice nurse without access to PCP or Covering Physician/Practitioner. 6. Other (to be specified by the reviewer).

BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD OF NEBRASKA
APPOINTMENT AVAILABILITY AND AFTER HOURS ACCESS STANDARDS FOR PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIANS

Blue Cross Blue Shield Nebraska has established standards for access to care for Primary Care Physicians in the managed care networks. Performance against these standards is assessed on a practice-specific and an organization-wide basis. Member complaints and applicable member satisfaction survey results are also used by the Plan to evaluate performance.

Part I. Appointment Availability

A. Compliance to the following Appointment Availability/Access to Care Standards is monitored as part of the medical record review program:
    1. Urgent – ill
    2. Symptomatic
    3. Preventive Care
    4. Emergency

B. At the time of the on-site review of primary care physicians, the On-Site Review Coordinator will review appointment/scheduling book and office policies and procedures. Appropriate office staff are interviewed. The results are noted on the review worksheet.

Part II After Hours Access

A. Compliance to the After Hours Access Standard is monitored by the On-site Review Coordinator either before or after the on-site review.
    1. A telephone call is placed to the PCP's after hours telephone number provided by the office staff.
    2. An audit worksheet is completed for each office called.

B. Criterion for Acceptable response include:
    - Physician or Covering physician/practitioner
    - Answering System/Service with option to page physician/practitioner
    - An advice nurse with access to PCP or covering physician/practitioner

C. Criterion for Unacceptable response include:
    - Answering machine that only takes a message
    - A message that recommends calling during business hours
    - A message that recommends seeking care through ER or Urgent Care Center
    - No answer after 10 rings
    - An advice nurse without access to the PCP or covering physician/practitioner

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