



Early Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) and Personal Care Services

Overview

In Pennsylvania, Medicaid or [Medical Assistance \(MA\)](#) is a program that provides physical, health care, behavioral health care and long term care services for eligible individuals. Income, household size, and/or disability determines [MA eligibility](#). Each state has its own MA program that is a partnership between each state and federal government and is overseen by the federal government.

Children under 21 years of age, who have a significant disability, are entitled to MA benefits regardless of their parents' income. Every child that has Medicaid is eligible to receive services under Early Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT).

EPSDT is a part of a states' MA program that provides health services, preventive check-ups and treatment children need to maintain and/or improve their health. EPSDT is designed to ensure that all eligible children have full access to health care services; prevention, detection and treatment. Many times, a family is receiving services under EPSDT and are not aware.

Treatment must be medically necessary, a covered MA service and provided by an eligible Medicaid Provider.

Personal Care Services

The EPSDT program can provide Personal Care services for a child under age 21 with a disability. The child must have a need for this service to maintain their health and safety. Personal Care services provide assistance to help children with their activities of daily living (ADL). Examples of ADL's are getting up, dressing, bathing, grooming, toileting, eating, and meal preparation.

These services are to be provided when parents are not able or available to provide the care themselves. Parents may need to work, sleep during the day, if working through the night, or awake frequently caring for their child, attending to other children or responsibilities or cannot physically tend to the child. Personal care is focused on the child's needs and is not to replace the primary caregiver.

Personal Care services are not wrap-around or behavioral health services. It is not Respite. Respite care is defined as the primary purpose of relieving the child's caregiver and is therefore not covered under EPSDT. The Personal Care Assistant (PCA) cannot deliver therapeutic or behavior assistance. EPSDT services are not behavioral health coverage.

How to Apply for Personal Care Services

The family will need to work with the child's Managed Care Organization/Insurance Company. On the back of your child's MA insurance card, locate and call the Member Services phone number and ask for the Special Needs Unit (SNU). The SNU coordinator can walk you through the process to apply for a PCA through the EPSDT program.

Personal Care services must be prescribed by your child's pediatrician who will need to write a letter explaining why these services are medically necessary. This is the Letter of Medical Necessity.

The Letter of Medical Necessity should include ALL the following information with:

- an explanation of the child's disability
- an explanation as to why the parents are "unable" or "unavailable" to take care of the child's activities of daily living.
- an exact request for the number of hours per week of personal care services needed.

Specific information on writing the Letter of Necessity can be found at [Disability Rights Pennsylvania](#).

Once the Personal Care service is approved or denied, you will receive a call or letter from the insurance company.

- If denied, there is an appeal process you can follow through your insurance company.
- If approved, you can choose an agency from a list provided to you by the insurance company.

Other useful resources

[Medical Assistance \(MA\)](#)

[Medical Assistance \(MA\) Eligibility](#)

[Applying for Personal Care Services for Children with Disabilities - Disability Rights of PA](#)

Achieva disability advocates provide information, technical assistance and individual advocacy on issues that impact children and adults with intellectual disabilities and autism and their families. We also work with state and federal legislators and policy makers to ensure that the human, civil and legal rights of people with disabilities are protected and that they are afforded services to assist them to be included in their communities. We will provide guidance, information and technical assistance to the best of our ability. Achieva advocates are available to answer questions specific to your situation. Please contact us at 412.995.5000 x486, 888.272.7229 x 486 (Toll-Free) or log onto www.achieva.info/contact-advocacy.