



**BlueCross BlueShield  
of Louisiana**

An independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.



**HMO  
Louisiana, Inc.**

A subsidiary of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana,  
independent licensees of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.

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September 2, 2005

Dear Provider:

The employees of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana (BCBSLA) and our wholly owned subsidiary, HMO Louisiana, Inc. (HMOLA) wish to extend their support and heartfelt concern to the victims of Hurricane Katrina. Louisiana has experienced tragic loss in the wake of this devastating storm, and the health and well-being of our residents are top priority. Doctors and hospitals are facing unusual circumstances in treating patients in the affected parishes.

Due to Hurricane Katrina, the offices of BCBSLA were closed on Monday, August 29 and Tuesday, August 30. We resumed normal operating hours on August 31 for all offices except the New Orleans and Houma district offices.

In response to these special circumstances, BCBSLA suspended contractual requirements for prior authorizations for covered services received by members throughout our entire statewide service area for both Monday, August 29 and Tuesday, August 30.

Until further notice, we will ***continue to suspend*** prior authorization requirements for covered services for our members and providers located in the area most directly affected by the storm, specifically the parishes of Orleans, Washington, St. Tammany, St. Bernard, Plaquemines, St. James, Terrebonne, Lafourche, Assumption, St. Mary, Tangipahoa, St. Charles, Jefferson and St. John. This will ensure that patients get the care they need, when they need it. *This does not suspend the application of any exclusions in the subscriber's policy, such as those for pre-existing conditions, investigational services, or other policy limitations.*

To help the residents of the most gravely affected parishes, the company is giving its customers access to *all* doctors and hospitals for covered medical services – even if they are not part of the BCBSLA and HMOLA network.

Blue Cross is granting a grace period on premium payments to customers in the affected areas. For these customers, all premiums already due or coming due in September will not be acted upon until November 1. In other words, if your payment is postmarked by November 1, a premium delinquency will not result in a cancellation of your policy. We will continue to monitor the situation and we'll do whatever is possible to give the hurricane victims relief for those customers in the following parishes: Assumption, Jefferson, Lafourche, Orleans, Plaquemine, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. James, St. John, St. Mary, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Terrebonne and Washington.

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Customers should direct any questions to 1-800-599-BLUE (2583).

The U.S. Post Office has also requested that Blue Cross discontinue all mail into areas with ZIP codes beginning with 700, 701, 703 and 704 until further notice. This disruption in mail service will affect our ability to send any correspondence to providers through the postal system. Affected providers should call 1-800-599-BLUE (2583) for more information. All electronic correspondence will continue without interruption.

If you are one of the affected providers and need to change your billing address temporarily, you can call our Network Operations Department at 1-800-716-2299, option 3. You must be able to provide three of the four following items: your current billing address, Tax ID, Social Security and physical address. If you would like to be set up for Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT), please call us at 1-800-716-2299, option 3 and we will work with you to send you the proper form to fill out and inform you of any other necessary information we will need to assist you in setting this up.

If you want to pick up your checks while you are waiting for your EFT to be set up and/or your billing address was affected by the hurricane in one of the above parishes, you can call customer service at 1-800-599-BLUE (2583) and they will assist you with your request. You will be able to pick up your check within 24 hours of the request. The individual requesting and picking up the check will be subject to our authentication procedures and will have to sign for the checks as evidence of receipt.

*If you are seeing a patient for the first time because they are being displaced due to Hurricane Katrina and they do not know the medications they are taking, please know that BCBSLA has a resource to assist you. BCBSLA contracts with Express Scripts, Inc. (ESI), a Pharmacy Benefit Management Company to provide pharmacy services. ESI can assist you in identifying the most recent medications filled by your patient when you call toll free at 1-866-781-7533. Please identify yourself as a BCBSLA provider and that you are in need of assistance because of a member displaced due to the hurricane. Be ready to provide the ESI customer service representative with the member's name, date of birth, and ID number. The ESI customer service representative will transfer you to a pharmacist, who will be happy to help you with the drug history questions of your BCBSLA member.*

Check the BCBSLA website at [www.bcbsla.com](http://www.bcbsla.com) and iLinkBlue for updated information.

Blue Cross stands committed to the residents of Louisiana and to helping rebuild this great state we call home.

Sincerely,



Dawn E. Cantrell  
Vice President  
Provider Network Administration  
DEC/dkk