



MedStar Family Choice

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Enrollee Newsletter

Fall 2024



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WE ARE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA MURIEL BOWSER, MAYOR

A message from Dr. Erica McClaskey



Dr. Erica McClaskey

Dear Enrollee,

With the fall season in full swing, changes in the weather and anticipation of the holiday season can bring excitement and anxiety for some people. There are several ways to prepare for the holiday season to prevent illness and help you manage self-care. One of the best ways to prevent illness is to stay up-to-date with flu and COVID-19 vaccines and encourage your loved ones to do the same. This is especially important if you plan to be in large gatherings. You should also participate in and encourage regular handwashing before and after arrival at large gatherings, and before and after eating. Also consider testing for COVID before family gatherings if you will be around people who are at high risk for infection. Wearing a proper fitting mask on public transportation can also help stop the spread of many illnesses.

For self-care, it is important to recognize that your mood may also be affected by the change in weather and shorter days with less sunlight. We encourage you to read the Let's Talk Behavioral Health section to learn about a common condition affecting millions of Americans every year and how to treat it. Maintaining

a healthy weight and exercising regularly are important elements of maintaining good physical and mental health.

Our team is always here to answer your questions, assist you with appointments, and support your healthcare needs. If we can help you in any way, please call Enrollee Services at **888-404-3549** or visit us at **MedStarFamilyChoiceDC.com**. Your voice is important to us, and we value your feedback and suggestions.

Stay Safe and Well,

Erica McClaskey, MD, MS, FAAFP, Senior Medical Director and Chief Medical Officer
MedStar Family Choice District of Columbia

A reminder about open enrollment

Beneficiaries enrolled in a DC Healthy Families, DC Healthcare Alliance, or Immigrant Children Program may opt to enroll in a different Contracted Managed Care Plan for any reason within ninety (90) days of enrollment or during an annual open enrollment period. The next annual open enrollment period is from November 1, 2024, through January 31, 2025.

To learn more, see your Enrollee Handbook on our website at [MedStarFamilyChoiceDC.com/Enrollees/General-Benefits](https://www.MedStarFamilyChoiceDC.com/Enrollees/General-Benefits).



MedStar eVisit – Telehealth

As a MedStar Family Choice District of Columbia Enrollee, you receive MedStar eVisit – Telehealth visits without needing an appointment and at no cost. You can use this service anytime, day or night, from your home. Doctors from MedStar Health will check you for common sicknesses and injuries and help you with treatment plans. To connect, download the app to your tablet or smartphone, or use your computer to go online. Visit [MedStarFamilyChoiceDC.com/Enrollee/eVisit](https://www.MedStarFamilyChoiceDC.com/Enrollee/eVisit) to learn more.



Let's Talk Behavioral Health

Topic: Shorter days, lower moods

As we move from fall to winter, some changes are welcome, like colorful landscapes and cooler temperatures. Other changes, like less sunlight from our shorter days and increased isolation due to bad weather, can impact our mood and behavior. If your mood, thoughts, or behavior changes significantly as the weather or seasons change, you may be struggling with symptoms of Seasonal Affective Disorder, or SAD, which can affect millions of Americans every year.

Seasonal Affective Disorder is characterized by a recurrent seasonal pattern of depression symptoms lasting 4-5 months of the year, which are often linked to the fall and winter months, although some people do experience changes during the summer months. The symptoms of Seasonal Affective Disorder include:

- Persistent sad or low mood
- Hopelessness
- Irritability
- Decreased motivation for or pleasure from activities
- Changes in sleep or appetite
- Isolation or withdrawal from others
- Difficulties with concentration or memory
- Thoughts of death or suicide



In most cases, SAD develops in young adulthood, although you may not notice your symptoms or the pattern until later in life. SAD is more common in areas that have harsher climates and shorter days during the winter. SAD is also more common among people who have a pre-existing mood disorder like major depression or bipolar disorder, and it can run in families.

The good news is there are effective treatments for people who struggle with SAD. Light therapy, psychotherapy, antidepressant medications, and vitamin D treatments can be used alone or in combination with one another. Light therapy is one of the most common treatments, as it helps expose people to more bright light that they may be missing during the fall and winter months. Talk therapy helps by naming depressive symptoms and changing the ways we think and behave, which can improve our mood. Antidepressant medications can support the brain to produce or use chemicals that affect mood or stress, but can take up to 4-8 weeks to be effective. Vitamin D supplements can help with SAD symptoms because many people who struggle with SAD have a Vitamin D deficiency.

If you notice yourself or someone else experiencing the symptoms of SAD, it's important to talk with your healthcare provider about your struggles to find the treatment plan that may be most effective for you.

A friendly reminder to get your flu vaccine and COVID-19 booster

Vaccines are available at local drug stores. During the past 50 years, vaccines have saved more than a billion lives in the United States. They prevent illnesses, disabilities, and viruses. MedStar Family Choice District of Columbia Enrollees (ages 3 and over) can get shots for free at participating pharmacies such as, CVS pharmacies, MedStar Health retail pharmacies, Target, Walmart, Walgreens, Rite Aid, Giant, Safeway, and other pharmacies in-network. This program includes flu shots and shots for shingles, hepatitis A and B, pneumonia, HPV (to help prevent cervical cancer), chicken pox, and tetanus. Flu shots are given on a walk-in basis.

For other shots, including the COVID-19 Booster vaccination, Enrollees should call the drug store to make sure the shot needed is in stock and to see if an appointment is necessary. Your doctor will be notified when you receive a shot and add it to your medical record. For more information on recommended vaccinations, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at [CDC.gov/Vaccines/Index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/Vaccines/Index.html) or talk to your primary care provider.



What is EPSDT, and why is it important?

MedStar Family Choice District of Columbia wants your child to visit their doctor every year to meet their EPSDT healthcare needs and requirements. EPSDT means Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment for children. At your child's annual doctor visit, they will ensure all your child's healthcare needs and requirements are met. For example, your doctor will make sure your child is up-to-date with all their required vaccinations. It is important to know that children two and under are required to have a blood test to check for lead. It is also important for all children and teens to have their cholesterol levels measured and a blood test to check for anemia (lack of healthy blood cells).



To see the Recommended Child and Adolescent Immunization Schedule, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at [CDC.gov/Vaccines/Index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/Vaccines/Index.html).

Transportation is provided for Enrollees

We offer transportation services, through Access2Care, for both DC Healthy Families and DC Healthcare Alliance plans. This service is at no cost to our Enrollees. If you need transportation for a medical appointment, including COVID-19 vaccinations, it can be scheduled 24/7 by calling **866-201-9974**. Transportation must be scheduled at least three business days before a regular appointment. It must be scheduled at least one business day before urgent visits or child Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) visits.

What is Utilization Management?

To ensure Enrollees get needed healthcare services, MedStar Family Choice District of Columbia follows a basic review process called Utilization Review. The process starts when an Enrollee's practitioner (doctor, nurse practitioner, or treating provider), sends a request for medical services to the MedStar Family Choice DC Utilization Management department, usually by fax. Our clinical staff reviews all requests and makes decisions based on medical necessity following guidelines such as InterQual, ASAM, and the Medicaid contract. If the documentation of the Enrollee's needs does not meet these guidelines, one of our medical directors will review the documentation and make a final decision. Utilization Management decisions are only based on whether the service is medically needed and if it is a covered benefit.

Our Utilization Management staff, providers, or anyone contracted with us do not receive any financial rewards (payment) for issuing denials of coverage and care. In addition, they do not receive any financial rewards for encouraging decisions that result in less use of services. Requests are complete when MedStar Family Choice DC receives all the necessary medical information.

- For medication requests, we will make a decision, or ask for additional medical information within 24 hours of receiving the request.
- For urgent requests, the final decision will not take longer than 72 hours of receiving the request.
- For standard or routine requests, the final decision cannot take longer than 14 days, whether or not all medical information has been received. If MedStar Family Choice DC denies the request, the Enrollee and the practitioner will receive a copy of the denial letter. The letter will list instructions on how to appeal the decision, if necessary.

If you have questions, please contact Enrollee Services at **888-404-3549**.



Join our Facebook community group!



We created a Facebook community group to help keep you informed and provide a space for you to learn and share information about your health plan.

This Facebook group features posts about:

- Health plan updates
- Community events and educational programs
- Healthcare incentives (free gift cards!)
- Enrollee benefits and wellness services
- Pharmacy updates
- Health tips and more!



Join the conversation at facebook.com/groups/3345653428815826/ or scan the QR code.



Compliance Corner

Topic: Prevent violations of Medicaid fraud and abuse laws

Some forms of Medicaid fraud can be hard to detect, while others are obvious to people who know what to look for. Common signs you are the victim of Medicaid fraud include:

- Receiving a bill from a provider for services normally covered by Medicaid.
- Offers of extra medical procedures, test, or drugs from a provider.
- Requests to borrow your card, or a benefits ID card going missing while another person uses it.
- Calls, emails, or other communications from healthcare providers or medical suppliers you haven't contacted, confirming your appointment or telling you your medical equipment is ready to pick up.
- Erroneous medical history in your file, such as a doctor asking you about a condition you were never diagnosed with, or an injury you never experienced. This could be a sign someone is posing as you to obtain benefits.

If you suspect you have been or might become the victim of Medicaid fraud, it's important to report your suspicions as early as possible. If allowed to continue, fraud on your account could drain your benefits, cost you money, and cause you to incur penalties, such as a loss of benefits. Medicaid beneficiaries identifying fraud and abuse activity should report it immediately by contacting MedStar Family Choice DC. There are many ways in which a beneficiary can report fraud concerns. If you know of a situation that may be confirmed or that you suspect to be fraudulent, wasteful, and abusive, report it immediately. Your report will remain confidential and anonymous as possible by calling or contacting one of the following resources:

- MedStar Family Choice DC Compliance/Integrity Hotline at **877-811-3411**.
- MedStar Family Choice DC Enrollee Services toll-free at **888-404-3549**.
- Website for compliance reporting at **Compliance-Helpline.com/MedStar.jsp**
- MedStar Health's Office of Corporate Business Integrity (OCBI) can be contacted via email at **compliance@medstar.net** or call us at **410-772-6606**.
- DC Department of Health Care Finance Fraud Hotline at **877-632-2873**.

MedStar Family Choice District of Columbia complies with applicable federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, or sex.

If you do not speak and/or read English, please call **888-404-3549** between 8:00 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. A representative will assist you.

Si no habla o lee inglés, llame al **888-404-3549** entre las 8:00 a.m. y las 5:30 p.m. Un representante se complacerá en asistirle.

Nếu bạn không nói và/hoặc đọc tiếng Anh, xin gọi **888-404-3549** từ 8 giờ 00 sáng đến 5 giờ 30 chiều. Sẽ có người đại diện giúp bạn.

‘영어로 대화를 못하시거나 영어를 읽지 못하는 경우, 오전 8시 00분에서 오후 5시 30분 사이에 **888-404 3549** 번으로 전화해 주시기 바랍니다. 담당 직원이 도와드립니다.

Si vous ne parlez pas ou lisez l'anglais, s'il vous plaît appeler **888-404-3549** entre 8:00 du matin et 5:30 du soir. Un représentant vous aidera.

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‘如果不能講和/或不能閱讀英語, 請在上午 8:00 到下午 5:30之間給 **888-404-3549** 打電話, 我們會有代表幫助



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The Enrollee Newsletter is a publication of MedStar Family Choice District of Columbia. For more information on your plan or anything in this newsletter, please visit [MedStarFamilyChoiceDC.com](https://www.MedStarFamilyChoiceDC.com) or call Enrollee Services at **888-404-3549**.

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It's how we **treat people.**