



## **Monroe Plan for Medical Care IPA February 2026 Newsletter**

### **Office Operations**

Prior Authorization

Credential Providers

Provider Data Validation

Monroe Plans - Provider Guide

Access and Availability Standards

### **Provider Resources and News**

February - American Heart Month

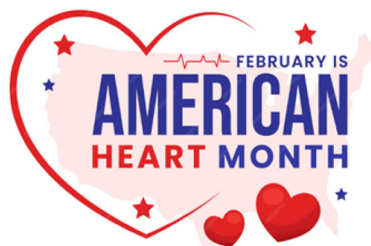
Accurate Blood Pressure Measurement - Why it Matters

BestSelf Behavioral Health Opens

Molina News Corner

Cultural Competency Training Modules

Easy to Find Resources - Monroe Plan Website



### **February 2026: American Heart Month**

As we observe **American Heart Month** this February, it is easy to celebrate the incredible technological advancements in cardiovascular care over the past century,

from coronary angiography and heart surgery to pacemakers, stents, and heart transplants. These innovations have saved countless lives and improved quality of life for many individuals. However, it is equally important to remember that **heart disease**, the leading cause of death in the United States, is often **preventable**. While medical interventions are lifesaving, much of our heart health is in our own hands. The key to reducing the risk of heart disease lies in adopting a **heart-healthy lifestyle**.

This month offers a perfect opportunity to reflect on the habits we can change and the lifestyle modifications we can embrace to reduce our risk. Here are 10 essential steps that can help us live longer, healthier lives and support our hearts:

1. **Quit smoking:** No amount of smoking is safe. Even occasional smoking can damage the heart and blood vessels. Set a quit date today.
1. **Improve sleep habits:** Lack of sleep increases the risk of high blood pressure and heart disease. Aim for 7 to 9 hours of quality sleep each night.
1. **Adopt healthier eating habits:** The **DASH** (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) eating plan is a wonderful way to lower blood pressure and cholesterol. Focus on more fruits, vegetables, and fish in your diet.
1. **Manage cholesterol:** Know your numbers! High cholesterol is a key risk factor for heart disease. Dietary changes and medications can help manage your cholesterol levels.
1. **Control blood sugar:** With diabetes on the rise, it is crucial to manage blood sugar levels. Eating a balanced diet rich in fruits and vegetables, while monitoring carbohydrate intake, is essential.
1. **Increase physical activity:** Aim for at least **150 minutes** of moderate physical activity each week. This does not have to happen all at once—small, consistent efforts add up.
1. **Maintain a healthy weight:** Staying at a healthy weight reduces the strain on your heart and lowers the risk of many chronic conditions.
1. **Control blood pressure:** Keep your blood pressure in the target range of **130/80 mmHg** or lower to protect your heart and arteries.

1. **Manage stress:** Chronic stress can harm your heart. Try relaxation techniques such as meditation, deep breathing, or yoga to improve emotional and physical health.
1. **Build and nurture social connections:** Strong social relationships are a key component of heart health. Support from friends and family can help keep you motivated and encourage you to stick with your heart-healthy lifestyle changes.

As we celebrate **American Heart Month** this February, let us focus not only on the advancements in medical care but also on the power we each have to prevent heart disease through lifestyle changes. Small, consistent steps can have a significant impact on our heart health, helping us live longer, healthier lives. By embracing these heart-healthy habits, we can reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, improve our quality of life, and inspire others to do the same. Let us act today to care for our hearts—not just this month, but every day.

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### **Accurate Blood Pressure Measurement: Why It Matters**

Small changes in blood pressure readings can have a significant impact on a patient's health. Inaccurate measurements may lead to delayed or unnecessary treatment. Therefore, it is essential to obtain precise blood pressure measurements in the office.

Share these recommendations with your staff to ensure accuracy when monitoring patients' blood pressure: A correct-sized cuff on a bare arm is essential; placing a cuff over clothing can add 10–40 mm Hg.

An empty bladder is important; a full bladder can add 10–15 mm Hg.

Remain quiet during the measurement; talking can add 10–15 mm Hg.

Support the arm at heart level; an unsupported arm can add 10 mm Hg.

Keep feet flat on the ground; dangling feet can add 5–10 mm Hg.

Uncross legs during measurement; crossed legs can add 2–8 mm Hg.

Ensure the back is supported; an unsupported back can add 5–10 mm Hg.

If the blood pressure reading is  $\geq 140/90$  mm Hg, wait five minutes and recheck.

Initiate treatment if indicated; waiting even six weeks to begin treatment can increase cardiovascular damage.

Always follow up with patients to monitor and manage their blood pressure.

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## **BestSelf Behavioral Health Opens Best Response Intensive Crisis Center at 430 Niagara Street in Buffalo!**

The first of its kind, BestSelf recently opened a calm, welcoming, trauma-informed environment offering patients with immediate support, counseling, medication assistance and short-term stabilization. The center was designed for people experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis.

Appointments are not needed, and people may stay for up to 23 hours and 59 minutes. It is open for both walk-ins and people brought in by crisis professionals or first responders. BestResponse Intensive Crisis Center offers a compassionate alternative to the emergency room. Before discharge, the team works on coordination of follow-up support and next steps in managing the individual's mental health and/or substance use disorder.

For additional information visit: [BestResponse Intensive Crisis Center](#) | [Best Self](#) | [Your BestSelf begins here](#) or call 716.884.0888.

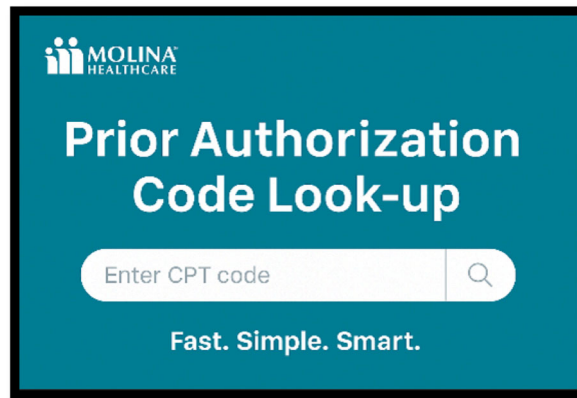
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### **Molina Corner**

- To review how to manage claims click here: [Managing claims](#)
- Availity Appeals and Reconsideration changes: [Availity Appeals and Reconsideration changes](#)
- Submit and track your appeals on Availity Essentials: [Submit and track your appeals on Availity Essentials](#)
- The Provider Manual is customarily updated annually but may be updated more frequently as needed. Providers can access the most current Provider Manual at: [Molina Provider Manual](#)

- Molina Provider Newsletters: [Molina Provider Newsletters](#)



### **Need Prior Authorization?**

This LookUp tool is for Outpatient services. All elective inpatient admissions to acute hospitals, SNFs, AIRs, or LTACHs need prior authorization unless stated otherwise by law. See your provider handbook for emergent admission review processes. All Medicaid LTSS services require prior authorization, regardless of code.

Information on this PA LookUp Tool is updated quarterly; obtaining authorization does not guarantee payment. The plan may review benefit limits, member eligibility, coding, billing, and appropriateness of care setting. If unsure about needing prior authorization, check your Provider Manual or submit a request form.

No prior authorization is required for office visits with participating providers. All non-participating providers need prior authorization except for emergency services and certain codes during non-elective admissions, or as mandated by law.

Molina Clinical Services manages Utilization Management for some administered drugs. Drugs listed for prior authorization that are assigned new HCPCS codes will still need authorization until otherwise noted. To access this useful tool click the link: [New York Providers Home](#)

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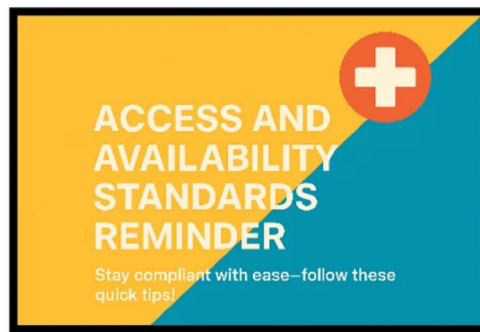
**“Need to credential providers? Get answers in a click!”**

To learn more about the credentialing process please use this FAQ this quick reference guide. [Credentialing-FAQ-Tip-Sheet.docx](#) If you have additional questions, please email [pfmemails@monroeplan.com](mailto:pfmemails@monroeplan.com)

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## Access And Availability Standards Reminder

New York State routinely completes surveillance activities to evaluate compliance with the following appointment availability standards, (Medicaid Model Contract 15.2, Appointment Availability Standards): [Access-to-Care\\_82525.docx](#)



Unlock key insights in the Monroe Plan for Medical Care Provider Guide: Monroe Plan Provider Guide. Stay informed-Don't miss out: Click on this link to learn more: [Monroe-Plan-Provider-Orientation-Guide](#). If you have any questions, please reach out to: [pfmemails@monroeplan.com](mailto:pfmemails@monroeplan.com) or [providerrelations@monroeplan.com](mailto:providerrelations@monroeplan.com).

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**We invite you to join us in advancing health equity**

Training modules and resources are available to enhance cultural competency when serving diverse patient populations. These materials support staff in addressing disparities and improving health outcomes. Molina prioritizes provider support and is committed to health equity by adhering to the National CLAS Standards and meeting all regulatory and accreditation requirements related to equity.

Building culturally competent health care: Resources for providers and staff Cultural competency can positively impact a patient's health care experiences and outcomes. Cultural competency training modules and resources are available to providers and office staff. You can access the resources through Availity Essentials portal: [Molina Healthcare | Availity Portal](#).

Cultural competency educational resources include:

- Cultural competency, including culturally and linguistically appropriate services (CLAS)
- Language access services, including effective communication strategies
- Health equity and disparities
- Social determinants of health
- Federal requirements, including the Affordable Care Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act

These resources also provide helpful tips and recommendations for effectively supporting unique subpopulations and communities, including racially, ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, LGBTQIA+ individuals, older adults, people with disabilities and immigrants/refugees. The training modules last 5 to 10 minutes. Depending on the topic of interest, you may participate in all or just one module. Upon completing the training, please submit the provider attestation form available through Availity Essentials portal. You must first log in and navigate to Molina Healthcare under Payer Spaces, then select the Resources tab, and then the Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services Provider Training Resources/Disability Resources and Links to view the available resources and training.

You can also access the New York State approved training, titled Think Cultural Health, offers several provider specific programs online, at no cost: <https://thinkculturalhealth.hhs.gov/education>.

Providers and appropriate staff should complete this training in the next 12 months and annually thereafter. Once finished, please share your certificate of completion with us at [providerrelations@monroeplan.com](mailto:providerrelations@monroeplan.com).

Be sure to review the bulletin and resource below to ensure cultural competency and compliance!

[Click here to download: NYSDOH Cultural Competency Notice](#)

[Click here to download: Are You Culturally Competent?](#)

Please forward the completed and signed attestation form to [providerrelations@monroeplan.com](mailto:providerrelations@monroeplan.com).



### **Provider Data Validation**

Kindly ensure your data is up to date by submitting the necessary documentation to update your practice's information to [pfmemails@monroeplan.com](mailto:pfmemails@monroeplan.com).

#### **These changes include:**

- Change in office location(s)/address, office hours, phone, fax or email.
- Addition or closure of office location(s).
- Addition of a provider (within an existing clinic/practice).
- Change in provider or practice name, Tax ID and/or NPI.
- Opening or closing your practice to new patients (PCPs only).
- Change in specialty.
- Change in billing address.
- Any other information that may impact member access to care.

Visit the Provider Resources & Forms – Monroe Plan for Medical Care section of our website. Click the link here: [Provider Resources & Forms – Monroe Plan for Medical Care](#). You will have the option to download a PDF version of the form and email the form to [pfmemails@monroeplan.com](mailto:pfmemails@monroeplan.com).

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## Essential, Easy-to-Find Resources Available on Monroe Plan for Medical Care Website

To save you time, we make it easy for you to obtain the support you need on the , [Monroe Plan for Medical Care](#) website.

- Use our page to find out more about our services here: [About Us – Monroe Plan for Medical Care](#).
- Find applications, forms, tip sheets, and more can be found here: [Provider Resources & Forms – Monroe Plan for Medical Care](#)
- Find our posted fee schedule effective 1/1/2024: [Provider Fee Schedules – Monroe Plan for Medical Care](#).
- Provider Guide Link: [Monroe-Plan-Provider-Orientation-Guide](#)
- Previous newsletters and bulletins can be found here: [Provider News & Events – Monroe Plan Communications](#)



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