

**An Important Message from
The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC)**

**STAR+PLUS & MMPs: STAR+PLUS Upgrade Process for Members Who
Exited a Nursing Facility (NF) Due to COVID-19 Without Services in
Place**

Background:

In response to COVID-19 and to comply with the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA, Public Law 116-127), HHSC maintained Medicaid coverage during the federal COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE). In accordance with the FFCRA, HHSC maintained the Medicaid eligibility of STAR+PLUS members who exited a NF on or after March 18, 2020, without transferring to STAR+PLUS Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS). This includes medical assistance only (MAO) members.

HHSC allowed UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of Texas to utilize the existing process for requesting upgrades to STAR+PLUS HCBS for STAR+PLUS members, including MAO members, who exited a NF on or after March 18, 2020, due to concerns about COVID-19 or in accordance with local orders during the early stages of the PHE, without STAR+PLUS HCBS in place. HHSC only needed to implement this flexibility for MAO members because non-MAO members are able to access the existing upgrade process described in the STAR+PLUS Handbook, [Section 3330, STAR+PLUS Members Requesting an Upgrade to the STAR+PLUS Home and Community Based Services Program](#).

The process was as follows:

- UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of Texas identified eligible members and informed them of the option to upgrade to STAR+PLUS HCBS.
- UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of Texas conducted the initial STAR+PLUS HCBS Program medical necessity/level of care (MN/LOC) assessment for program eligibility as soon as possible via telehealth (audio + visual) or telephone and in compliance with the guidance on waiver assessments released on October 27, 2020.
- UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of Texas developed the Individual Service Plan (ISP) telephonically and sent through the TexMedCentral portal.
- HHSC staff processed STAR+PLUS HCBS enrollment if all eligibility criteria were met: approved medical necessity and ISP and active Medicaid eligibility for STAR+PLUS.

Key Details:

The PHE ends on May 11, 2023. Under the federal American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021 maintenance of effort (MOE) requirements, HHSC must keep certain PHE flexibilities in place until the Texas HCBS ARP MOE period ends. With the federal PHE ending on May 11, 2023, the current ARP MOE period for Texas is scheduled to end on August 31, 2023. Therefore, the COVID-19 flexibility pertaining to the 'STAR+PLUS HCBS Upgrade Process for Members Who Exited a NF Due to COVID-19 Without Services in Place,' will end on August 31, 2023.

After August 31, 2023, use of the upgrade process will be limited to the STAR+PLUS-enrolled members described in Section 3330 of the STAR+PLUS Handbook. MAO members who leave the NF without STAR+PLUS HCBS services in place after August 31, 2023, will lose their NF Medicaid eligibility and be disenrolled from STAR+PLUS making them ineligible to access the STAR+PLUS upgrade process. For this reason, HHSC wants UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of Texas to use the Money Follows the Person (MFP) process to work with STAR+PLUS members in nursing facilities who wish to return to the community as described in STAR+PLUS Handbook Section 3500, [Money Follows the Person](#).

***Please note:**

- Members who used this flexibility on or before August 31, 2023, will remain in STAR+PLUS HCBS as long as they continue to meet the Medicaid eligibility redetermination and STAR+PLUS HCBS eligibility requirements.
 - UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of Texas service coordinators must conduct the STAR+PLUS HCBS annual reassessment for these members according to the required STAR+PLUS HCBS reassessment timelines.
 - UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of Texas will assist Members with providing the needed information for the Medicaid eligibility renewal process.
- HHSC will review the applications for members, including MAO members, who exited the NF due to concerns about COVID-19 but started the STAR+PLUS HCBS application process on or before August 31, 2023. By August 31, 2023, the HHSC Program Support Unit must have received the H2067 from UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of Texas notifying of an MFP request and the member leaving the NF due to COVID-19 concerns. Any request received after August 31, 2023, will not be processed for MAO members.
 - These members will be enrolled in STAR+PLUS HCBS if they meet the eligibility criteria for the program.
 - MAO members who are not approved for STAR+PLUS HCBS will lose their NF Medicaid eligibility and be disenrolled from STAR+PLUS.

Action:

Effective September 1, 2023, STAR+PLUS UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of Texas must limit the upgrade process to non-MAO members residing in the community who are eligible as described in the STAR+PLUS Handbook Section 3330, STAR+PLUS Members Requesting an Upgrade to the STAR+PLUS Home and Community Based Services Program. If there are any changes to the Texas HCBS ARP MOE timeline, HHSC will provide an update to UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of Texas.

If you have any questions, please contact Customer Service at **888-887-9003**, Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Central Time.