



Orange County Realignment: Frequently Asked Questions for Providers

These questions and answers are intended to help providers serving Orange County individuals and families better understand the proposed transition of the County's management of Medicaid and uninsured benefits from Cardinal Innovations Healthcare to Alliance Health.

What is this all about?

On November 5, 2020, the Orange County Board of Commissioners voted to begin the process of seeking State approval to change which of North Carolina's Local Management Entity/Managed Care Organizations (LME/MCOs) has responsibility for managing behavioral health and intellectual/developmental disability (I/DD) services for Orange County residents who are insured by Medicaid or who have no health insurance (such residents receiving services are "Members"). This process is called "disengagement" or "realignment." In this case, the County is seeking to transition that responsibility from Cardinal Innovations Healthcare to Alliance Health. On February 16, 2021, the Commissioners unanimously approved a Disengagement Plan and posted that plan for public comment. Any disengagement from Cardinal and realignment of the County with Alliance will require the approval of the Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NC DHHS). If approved by the Secretary, it is the intent of both the County and Alliance to ensure a seamless transition from Cardinal to Alliance and prevent any disruption in services for Members and providers.

More information about this realignment process is available on the Orange County website at www.orangecountync.gov/2634/LMEMCO-Disengagement and the Alliance Health website at www.alliancehealthplan.org/about-alliance/orange-county-lme-mco-disengagement/.

When will this realignment take place?

We expect that Alliance Health will begin managing these services for Orange County Members on January 1, 2022. As noted above, Orange County must first get approval for this realignment from the Secretary of NC DHHS. Once approved, Orange County and Alliance will go through a comprehensive Implementation Phase. This Implementation Phase will take at least six months. We anticipate that the Implementation Phase will begin in the summer of 2021.

The following are some important dates in the realignment process:

- **February 17, 2021** – Orange County published the Disengagement Plan for 60 days public comment
- **April 18, 2021** – Orange County posted public comments received for 30 days
- **May 19, 2021** – Orange County will submit the Request to Disengage to the Secretary of NC DHHS
- **August 17, 2021** – Deadline for the Secretary to approve or deny the Request to Disengage

- **Date of Secretary Approval–December 31, 2021** – Implementation Phase
- **January 1, 2022** – Proposed effective date of realignment

Will my agency be impacted?

If your agency is providing behavioral health and/or I/DD services to one or more Medicaid or uninsured residents of Orange County on December 31, 2021, then your agency will need to contract with Alliance Health in order to continue providing services and receiving payment for those Orange County residents. The good news is that Alliance already contracts with 21 of the 38 Orange County providers currently contracted with Cardinal Innovations Healthcare. Your agency will be contacted by Alliance following the formal approval of the realignment by the Secretary in order to discuss specifically what your agency will need to do to make the transition to Alliance.

Will Orange County residents currently receiving services managed by Cardinal be able to keep the same service provider?

Yes, so long as the provider agrees to join the Alliance Network. Alliance will work with providers currently serving Orange County Members to include them in Alliance's Provider Network. Alliance will also honor all services that have already been authorized, a Member's annual plan, and other existing documentation and care decisions to help ensure a smooth transition and prevent any disruption in services.

Will Alliance reduce the rate I am paid for services?

Alliance will continue to honor Cardinal's rates for providers serving Orange County Members for the foreseeable future (barring any changes to state and/or Medicaid funding that would necessitate broader changes to Alliance provider rates across our entire region). Additionally, if a provider is paid a lower rate than Alliance's rate, Alliance will make upward adjustments (contingent upon Alliance's financial due diligence of the current Orange County provider network).

Does Alliance cover the same benefits that Cardinal does?

Alliance will work with Orange County to ensure a full complement of services is available to meet the behavioral health and I/DD needs of County residents that are insured by Medicaid or are uninsured. Moreover, Cardinal has provided assurances that it will continue to provide services to Members during this transition to Alliance.

In situations where Cardinal offers a Medicaid service that Alliance does not, the County will work with Alliance to either add that service to the Medicaid Benefit Plan, if the County and Alliance agree it is appropriate to do so, or the County will ensure Alliance's community array has like or comparable services to meet the needs of Members. All LME/MCOs in the state must offer a basic array of Medicaid services that is substantially comparable, even if named or branded differently, but such services and process for authorization may not be identical. In cases where there are such differences, Alliance will provide training and support to providers impacted by changes and will notify Medicaid Members at least 30 days prior to the effective date of a significant change to their healthcare plan.

In instances where the County has non-Medicaid services in place that are not included in the Alliance Non-Medicaid Benefit Plan, Alliance will re-evaluate such service array annually in relation to applicable state funding allocations.

Is Alliance the same type of entity as Cardinal?

Yes, Alliance and Cardinal are both LME/MCOs and are political subdivisions of the state of North Carolina. Both entities operate the 1915 b/c Medicaid Waiver and state-funded behavioral health services under contracts with the state, but for different catchment area counties. Alliance currently operates in Wake, Durham, Cumberland and Johnston counties. In addition to the 1915 b/c Medicaid Waiver, Alliance also manages the Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Waiver in its catchment area. Both entities have applied to become a Behavioral Health and I/DD Tailored Plan as part of North Carolina's Medicaid Transformation.

What if I have other questions?

You can visit the Orange County website at www.orangecountync.gov/2634/LMEMCO-Disengagement and the Alliance Health website at www.alliancehealthplan.org/about-alliance/orange-county-lme-mco-disengagement/ for the latest information.