



What are the benefits of being designated an Essential Community Provider (ECP)?

Contracting with Health Plans

Health plan companies must offer a provider contract to any designated ECP located in the area served by the health plan company.

[62Q.19 ESSENTIAL COMMUNITY PROVIDERS](#)

Subd. 3. Health plan company affiliation.

Health plan companies with fewer than 50,000 enrollees, all of whom are on medical assistance, are excepted from this requirement. As MDH has implemented the law, an ECP must request a contract from the health plan company before the health plan company is required to offer a contract. Contracting with more health plans gives a provider access to more patients with a source of reimbursement for care. While the health plan company should not unduly delay the start date of a contract, it may choose a start date that will place the ECP on the same contracting schedule as other contracted providers.

Contracted rates must be at least as much per unit of service as are paid to other providers for the same or similar services.

[Subd. 5. Contract payment rates.](#)

An essential community provider and a health plan company may negotiate the payment rate for covered services provided by the essential community provider. This rate must be at least the same rate per unit of service as is paid to other health plan providers for the same or similar services.

The health plan company may require ECPs to meet the same data requirements, utilization review, and quality assurance requirements that other contracted providers must meet.

If a health plan company does not respond to a request for a contract, or offers a contract that is not on par with other contracted providers, remind the health plan company of its obligations under Minnesota Statutes, Section 62Q.19, subdivisions 3 and 5.¹ If the health plan company still does not offer an appropriate contract, you may contact the Managed Care System for assistance. Call 651-201-5100, or 800-657-3916, toll free.

The Minnesota Department of Health is authorized to impose monetary penalties against Health Maintenance Organizations that violate ECP law.

Prepaid health services

Community health clinics that are designated as Essential Community Providers and are associated with a hospital, governmental unit, or the University of Minnesota may offer basic health care services on a fixed prepaid basis without satisfying other statutory requirements.

See [Minnesota Statutes, section 62Q.22](#).

Credentialing of providers

A health plan company that initially credentialed, as network providers, individual providers employed by or under contract with a community mental health center must continue to credential the same number of providers from the center if the center is an Essential Community Provider and meets certain other requirements. The health plan company cannot refuse on the grounds that their network has a sufficient number of providers of that type.

See [Minnesota Statutes, Section 62Q.096](#).

Health care grants

A nonprofit community mental health program is eligible for a health care grant for the uninsured if it has been designated an Essential Community Provider.

See [Minnesota Statutes, Section 145.929, subdivision 2](#).

Enhanced payment Rates

Certain Essential Community Providers may be eligible for enhanced payment rates under Medical Assistance (MA). For more information, please refer to the [Minnesota Health Care Program \(MHCP\) Provider Manual](#) or contact the [MCHP Provider Call Center \(651-431-2700 or 800-366-5411\)](#).

See [Minnesota Statutes, Section 256B.763, and Minnesota Rules, Parts 9520.0750 to 9520.0870; Minnesota Statutes, Section 256B.76, subd. 1\(g\) and 256B.766, par. \(g\), and Minnesota Statutes, Section 256B.767](#)
