

ALTCS EMERGENCY RULE AND POLICY FOR MINOR CHILDREN

Frequently Asked Questions

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Q1: Who will be impacted by the new rule and forthcoming policy changes?

- A1: The October 15, 2025 Emergency Rulemaking will impact Arizona Long Term Care System (ALTCS) members under the age of 18 who are assessed for direct care and/or habilitation services either through the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD-ALTCS) or a health plan administering the Elderly and Physically Disabled program (EPD-ALTCS), including UnitedHealthcare Community Plan LTC, Banner-University Family Care LTC, or Mercy Care LTC.

Adults served by ALTCS DDD and EPD health plans are not subject to the age limitations in the HNT.

Q2: What rules and policies are changing, and why?

- A2: The state law signed in April of 2025 [directed AHCCCS](#) to adopt “a strengthened standardized assessment tool to determine the need for extraordinary care for minor children.” AHCCCS updated the Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Needs Tool (HNT), which assesses the needs of children for both direct care and habilitation services, to meet this requirement.

ALTCS health plans, including DDD, began assessing eligible children using the updated HNT on October 1, 2025. After hearing from families, the Governor directed AHCCCS to pursue emergency rulemaking and have clinicians re-evaluate and make any appropriate changes to the HNT. These changes include the addition of an extraordinary care review (exception) process, and new assessment categories, like specialty meal preparation, specialty eating, and specialty toileting. The emergency rulemaking allows AHCCCS to comply with state law while it proceeds with the regular rulemaking process.

AHCCCS will issue a limited, expedited public comment process for the relevant policies. Families, providers, clinicians, other experts, and interested parties will have the opportunity to provide feedback during expedited comment and feedback periods.

AHCCCS will continue to update the community regarding the rulemaking and policy change timeline.

For more information, please visit the AHCCCS Policy webpage [here](#). To sign up for AHCCCS Policy Notifications, please use [this link](#).

Q3: What is the HNT assessment?

A3: HNT stands for Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Needs Tool. The HNT is a standardized assessment tool created by AHCCCS to evaluate the functional and support needs of ALTCS members who may benefit from receiving certain HCBS to support activities of daily living (ADLs) and instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs). The HNT is used to assess member needs for Direct Care and Habilitation Services.

Q4: What are direct care and habilitation services?

A4: Direct care services, which include attendant care, personal care, and homemaker services, are services provided to ALTCS members who require assistance to meet their needs and to allow members to reside in their own home.

Habilitation service includes training in independent living skills or special developmental skills, sensory-motor development, orientation and mobility and behavior intervention.

Q5: How will the extraordinary care review (exception) process work?

A5: AHCCCS is developing an Extraordinary Care Review (exception) policy to outline the process. Once finalized, AHCCCS will require its health plans, including DDD and the EPD health plans (UnitedHealthcare Community Plan LTC, Banner-University Family Care LTC, or Mercy Care LTC), to develop and implement an extraordinary care review process in alignment with AHCCCS policy. Health plans will make sure that families understand the process and the criteria for requesting an exception. Extraordinary Care Review will be available to members who document that they need more direct care or habilitation service hours than assessed, based on the age limits and number of hours documented in the HNT.

Q6: What if my child has already been assessed for direct care and habilitation services since October 1, 2025?

A6: Children who have had their direct care or habilitation service hours reduced due to an HNT assessment conducted since October 1, 2025, will be prioritized for reassessment using the updated HNT.

Children who have been assessed for direct care and habilitation services since October 1, 2025, whose assessment indicated hours would be reduced but have not yet been reduced, will not have a reduction in hours until they have been reassessed using the updated HNT.

Q7: What if my child has an assessment scheduled while AHCCCS revises its policies?

A7: ALTCS health plans will not conduct HNT assessments until the relevant AHCCCS policies are finalized. Quarterly visits will still be held to review the Person-Centered Service Plan (PCSP) and any changes since your last visit.

Q8: What if my questions have not been answered here?

A8: Additional questions can be sent to PPCG@azahcccs.gov.