



HEALTH MATTERS

Spring/Summer 2025

How to get through allergy season with asthma

Allergy season can be tough for people with asthma. Use these tips to breathe easier.

During allergy season, pollen, grass and ragweed fill the air. If you're allergic to these substances, they can cause itching, sneezing and a stuffy nose. And if you have asthma, your airways are more sensitive to them. They can make your asthma flare up, adding coughing, wheezing and shortness of breath to your list of symptoms.

MercyCareAZ.org

MC-1782

Here are some tips to help manage asthma during spring allergy season.

① Know your triggers

Pay attention when your allergy symptoms flare up. What's around you — trees, grass, flowers? This helps you pinpoint exactly what you're allergic to. Then, you can figure out ways to avoid your triggers. You can also ask your doctor about allergy testing.

② Watch pollen counts

Check weather websites for local pollen counts and air quality. On days when allergens are high, try to stay inside. And keep windows closed to prevent pollen from coming in. If you need to go outside, wear a mask. It can help keep pollen out of your mouth and nose.

③ Clear away triggers

Pollen can stick to your clothes and hair. Change clothes when you get home and take a shower to wash off any pollen. Washing your sheets weekly helps keep your sleeping area allergen-free, too.

④ Use the right medicines

Always take your asthma meds as directed by your provider. If you use a rescue inhaler, have it nearby in case of an asthma attack. Adding over-the-counter allergy medicines to your routine can help prevent allergy symptoms. Ask your provider for their recommendations, and be sure to follow their directions carefully. You usually have to take allergy meds daily, even if you're feeling fine. Sometimes you need to start taking them before allergy season peaks.

Always check with your doctor for more tips for managing your symptoms safely. You can beat the pollen blues and enjoy the spring weather.



Your family's healthy-all-year secret

Spoiler alert: It's vaccinations. Here are four shots to keep on your radar.

Measles, mumps and rubella (MMR)

When it's given: Between 12 and 15 months of age for the first dose. And between ages 4 and 6 for the second dose. Sometimes adults need to get it again. Ask your doctor if you need the shot.

Chickenpox

When it's given: Children get two doses. One dose is given at 12 to 15 months old. The second dose is given between ages 4 and 6. If you've never been vaccinated or had chickenpox, you'll need the shot now.

Diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis (DTaP, Tdap)

When it's given: Younger children usually get five doses of DTaP between ages 2 months and 6 years. Tdap is for older kids, with a first dose between ages 11 and 12. Adults need a Tdap booster every 10 years (more often if pregnant).

Human papillomavirus (HPV)

When it's given: First dose is given between ages 11 and 12. If you're older and haven't had the shot, talk to your doctor. HPV, a sexually transmitted infection (STI), can cause cervical cancer and other cancers.

Go to [cdc.gov/vaccines/](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/) for a full list of vaccines. You can schedule vaccinations with your Primary Care Provider.



Medicare Part D

Learn about prescription drug benefits for dual-eligible members

People who are eligible and enrolled in both Medicaid and Medicare are considered “dual-eligible” members. Once you are Medicare eligible, your Medicaid plan can no longer pay for your drugs. Dual-eligible people need to enroll in a Medicare plan that includes Part D drug coverage.

Medicare Advantage plans include coverage for Medicare-covered services, Part D prescription drugs and other benefits not covered by Medicare.

Some Medicare Advantage plans are special needs plans (SNPs). These plans include coverage for Medicare-covered services, Part D prescription drugs and additional benefits. And they will coordinate with the Medicaid plan coverage a dual eligible member has.

Mercy Care offers a Dual-Eligible Special Needs Plan (D-SNP) called Mercy Care Advantage. It includes Part D drug coverage. If you qualify for the ALTCS E-PD Medicaid program, live in a long-term care facility (like a nursing home) or get home- and community-based services, you pay \$0 for covered drugs. With Part D coverage, you will pay a small amount for covered drugs.

If you don't join a Medicare plan that includes Part D drug coverage, Medicare will automatically enroll you in a stand-alone Medicare Part D prescription drug plan. People who are dual eligible can switch Medicare plans during certain times of the year.

Note: AHCCCS does not contract nor oversee the activities of any separate stand-alone Medicare Part D prescription drug plans.



Understand your pharmacy benefits

Mercy Care's List of Covered Drugs (also called the drug list or formulary) tells you which prescription drugs and over-the-counter drugs and items are covered at participating network pharmacies.

The drug list will tell you if there are any special rules or restrictions on any covered drugs. In these cases, you or the child's provider or other prescriber must ask the plan to cover a drug by submitting required medical information.

Visit **[MercyCareAZ.org/dcschp/pharmacy.html](https://www.mercycareaz.org/dcschp/pharmacy.html)** to find out about our pharmacy management and updates. You can see which drugs are covered and any requirements for getting them. You can also see what the provider needs to do if the child needs a medication that isn't covered.



Dental care tips

Your teeth and gums don't just give you a beautiful smile. They're vital to your overall health.

Brush your teeth and clean between your teeth twice every day using fluoride toothpaste. Dentists often recommend a toothbrush with soft bristles to prevent too much pressure against your teeth. Use dental floss between your teeth. This prevents harmful bacteria from growing in your mouth.

Also, eating well is key to a healthy mouth. Foods that are rich in calcium—including milk and yogurt—help keep your teeth strong. Limit foods that are high in sugar, such as soda. Sugar that stays on your teeth can lead to tooth decay.

Drink water with fluoride in it. Fluoride helps keep your teeth strong. The best source of fluoridated water is the tap in most cities, right over your kitchen

sink. Drinking water with fluoride may help prevent tooth decay.

Children and youth are required to have a dental visit within the first 30 days of entry into foster care. Children and youth should visit a dentist twice a year (every six months) for regular checkups and cleanings. This is a covered service for members ages 20 and under. If you are age 21 or older, check your member handbook to see if dental check-ups are a covered service or call Mercy Care Member Services.

A dentist is an important member of your care team. Visit www.MercyCareAZ.org to find an in-network dentist. Click “Find a provider” at the top of the homepage. Select the “Find a dentist” option.

Integrated care: What to know

Integrated care means that a member needs only one health plan to get care for their body and mind. Mercy Care members can get their physical and behavioral health services from us.

We offer integrated health services to all our members:

- Long-term care (LTC) members
- ACC-RBHA members (including members with a Serious Mental Illness, or SMI, designation)
- Members with a developmental disability
- Mercy Care Department of Child Safety Comprehensive Health Plan (Mercy Care DCS CHP) members

We also provide integrated services for Arizonans who are dually eligible for both Medicaid and Medicare with Mercy Care Advantage (D-SNP members).

We are committed to providing our members with more options to get physical and behavioral health care and wellness services. We simplify access to care for members with complex care needs. If you have any questions or need services, you can call Member Services.

Community Resources

As the saying goes, “It takes a village to raise a child.” Several organizations state-wide work for the betterment of children in child welfare and their caregivers. Visit mercycareaz.org/community-resource-guide for more resources.

AHCCCS

Resources for Foster/Kinship/Adoptive Families
azahcccs.gov/foster

Arizona Friends of Foster Children Foundation

Grant awards for children who have been adjudicated dependent wards of the court in Arizona.
affcf.org/awards

A Mighty Change of Heart

Personalized duffle bags for children in Arizona entering child welfare. amchaz.org

Arizona Helping Hands

Essential needs for children in child welfare.
azhelpinghands.org

Helen's Hope Chest

Essential needs for children in child welfare.
helenshopechest.org

Jose's Closet

Essential needs for children in child welfare.
josescloset.org



Strong Families AZ

A network of free home-visiting programs.
strongfamiliesaz.com

Raising Special Kids

To improve the lives of children with disabilities.
raisingspecialkids.org

Family Involvement Center

Support for securing emotional, physical and behavioral health care in Arizona.
familyinvolvementcenter.org

Safe to Sleep

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' public education on infant sleep safety. nichd.nih.gov/sts

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Health information for children, teens and pregnant women. cdc.gov/parents

Milestone Tracker app

Track your child's developmental milestones and share them with your pediatrician.
cdc.gov/MilestoneTracker

First Things First

Committed to the healthy development and learning of young children from birth to age 5.
firstthingsfirst.org

Safe Kids Worldwide

Working to help families and communities keep kids safe from injuries. safekids.org

Sesame Workshop

Activities and tips for the challenges and joys of ensuring a child's healthy development.
sesameworkshop.org

Southwest Human Development

Strengthens the foundation that Arizona's children need for a great start in life. swhd.org



Peer and family supports can lend a helping hand

Peer support and family support specialists are specially trained behavioral health providers who deliver supportive services to AHCCCS members, family members and caregivers. **View the list of peer and family support providers.**

Peer support for youth and young adults

Youth and young adults who have aged out of foster care may access peer support services if they are enrolled with AHCCCS and experiencing behavioral health challenges.

Peer support services help people:

- Connect to resources in the community
- Develop tools to use in times of crisis
- Create treatment and wellness plans

- Build advocacy skills when working with a treatment team

The Recovery Empowerment Network's H.E.R.O Discovery Center provides peer support and other services to people ages 18 to 25. They also host Teen Connections Night for youths ages 14 to 17. Visit **renaz.org** for information. Or call **1-602-248-0368**. The youth's or young adult's insurance provider may also have info on other peer support groups available.

Family support

Family support specialists educate and guide people through the behavioral health system. They are advocates who can help parents and caregivers find housing, food, employment, respite services and parenting classes. They may also provide services for children, such as help with school and life-skills training. Visit the **Family Involvement Center website** for more info on family support services.

Children in foster care

Peer support services are available to children in foster care to address their behavioral health needs. Parents and caregivers should ask their behavioral health provider about peer support services for children. **MIKID** and **Reach Family Services** offer peer support services and mentoring for youth. Support will also come

Peer story continued on page 7

Peer story continued

to them from members of the Child and Family Team (CFT).

The CFT includes the child, their caregiver, DCS Specialist, a behavioral health representative and any key person in the child's life who is invited to participate.

If a child in foster care is in a behavioral health crisis, call the Crisis Response Network Foster Care Line at **1-602-633-0763**.

Caregiver support

Who is caring for people who care for others? Caregivers such as biological, foster and kinship parents may need help dealing with difficult emotions and stressors. Caregivers may contact their behavioral health provider and ask about mental health supports. **Mental Health America** also has tools and resources to help caregivers.

Peers and families play an important role in helping members be as healthy as possible. That is why Mercy Care DCS CHP works with the Arizona Peer and Family Coalition, an organization of peer and family member advocates.

The coalition makes sure individuals and families have a say in behavioral health policy decisions that affect their community. To learn more about how to get involved or about peer and family support resources, email the Office of Individual and Family Affairs at **OIFATeam@mercycaresaz.org**.

Help for a behavioral health crisis

Mercy Care DCS CHP members can call the **Arizona Behavioral Health Crisis Line** 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at **1-844-534-HOPE (4673)** or text HOPE to **4HOPE (44673)**. Chat support is available at **crisis.solari-inc.org/start-a-chat**.

The Crisis Line staff can help:

- Provide crisis support over the phone
- Dispatch a crisis mobile team to support you in the community
- Arrange transportation to take you somewhere safe
- Help you arrange counseling or a connection to your outpatient provider
- Provide options for dealing with urgent situations
- If you feel unsafe at home

Tribal crisis lines:

- San Carlos Apache Reservation: **1-866-495-6735**
- Gila River and Ak-Chin Indian Communities: **1-800-259-3449**
- Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community: **1-855-331-6432**
- Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation: **1-480-461-8888**
- San Lucy District of the Tohono O'odham Nation: **1-480-461-8888**
- Tohono O'odham Nation: **1-844-423-8759**
- Pascua Yaqui Tribe:
Tucson **1-520-591-7206**;
Guadalupe **1-480-736-4943**
- White Mountain Apache Tribe: **1-928-338-4811**
- Navajo Nation: **1-928-551-0508**

Veterans Crisis Line: 988, press 1

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: 988

National crisis text line: Text HOME to **741741**
Chat support is available at **crisistextline.org/text-us**.

Teen Lifeline: Call or text **1-602-248-TEEN (8336)**

If you need someone to talk to, call the Warm Line at **1-602-347-1100**. Get 24/7 support from trained Peer Support Specialists.

*Always call **911** in life-threatening situations.*



Know the risks of vaping and tobacco

Vaping is a form of smoking that provides nicotine, marijuana or other chemicals through inhaling “vapor,” a cloudy mist. Vaping is popular with teens and young adults. Vaping devices can be easy to hide because they look like USB drives, pens or other everyday items. (Some look like cigarettes or pipes.) Young people enjoy the taste of the flavorings added to vaping devices, known as “e-juice” or “e-liquid.” Many also view vaping as safer than cigarettes. But vaping has many risks of its own.

Nicotine and addiction

Many vaping devices such as JUUL, a popular brand, contain high levels of nicotine. Nicotine is the highly addictive chemical found in tobacco.

According to **DrugAbuse.gov**, young people who vape are more likely to start smoking cigarettes later. Smoking cigarettes can cause cancer and other health problems.

Vaping has several other risks according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

- Some young people do not know that vaping products contain nicotine.

- Nicotine can harm how young people’s growing brains develop.
- Nicotine fuels the pleasure and reward parts of the brain, which can lead to addiction.
- Using nicotine may also lead to future addiction to other drugs.

Vaping and lung disease

In 2019, thousands of people got very sick and a few dozen died from a vaping-related lung disease. Many of the affected people used vaping products from family, friends or online sources that contained THC and vitamin E acetate. These chemicals were linked to the vaping lung disease.

Get help to quit

Programs are available to help teens and young adults quit vaping and/or tobacco products.

The N-O-T: Not On Tobacco program was created by the American Lung Association. It’s designed to help people ages 14 to 19 quit smoking tobacco products and/or vaping. Visit **lung.org/quit-smoking/helping-teens-quit/not-on-tobacco** for details. Smoking deterrents such as nicotine gums and patches are also covered for members.

Prevention

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) banned the sale of e-cigarettes (a type of vaping device) to anyone under 21. They also launched “The Real Cost,” a campaign to bring tobacco and vaping use prevention and education for youth to the public. Visit **fda.gov/tobacco-products/public-health-education-campaigns/real-cost-campaign** for more info.

Learn about sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and prevention

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are common and on the rise in Arizona. According to the Arizona Department of Health Services, almost 56,000 cases were reported in 2020, and cases have tripled since 2000. Young adults ages 15 to 24 are most at risk of getting an STI.

Talk openly with the child in your care about safe sex. A few moments of unsafe sexual practices can result in long-lasting effects on their lives.

STIs are spread by having oral, anal or vaginal sex with an infected person. STIs do not always show symptoms. For anyone who is sexually active, the best way to know if they have an STI is to get tested regularly.

STIs and pregnancy

Experts recommend getting tested for HIV and other STIs at the first prenatal visit. STIs can be transmitted to the baby and can put a pregnant woman and her baby at serious risk if left untreated.

How to prevent STIs

- The only way to guarantee avoiding STIs is to not have sex (practice abstinence).
- Using condoms the correct way can protect a person and their partner during sex. Practicing safe sex can also prevent unintended pregnancy.
- Limiting the number of sexual partners and asking them to get tested for STIs prior to sex can help prevent STIs.

Mercy Care DCS CHP covers testing and treatment for STIs. Make an appointment with the child's Primary Care Provider (PCP).

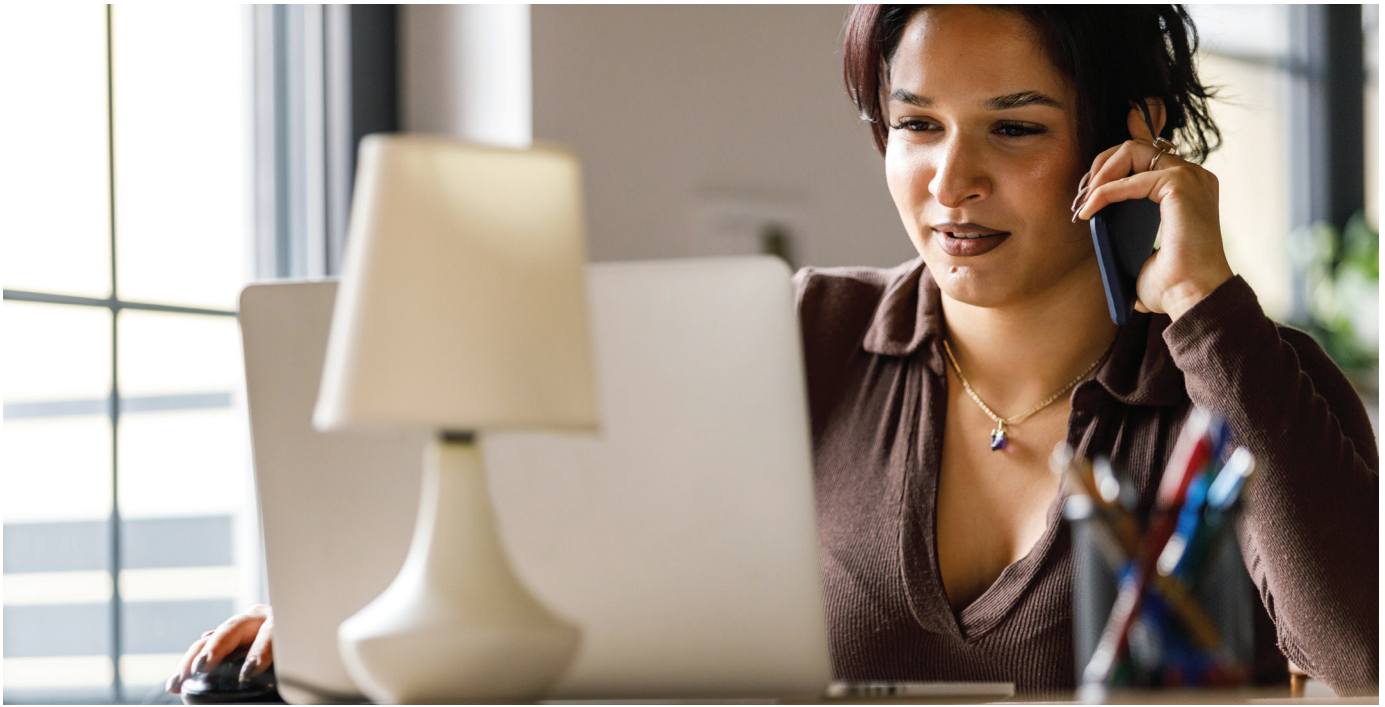


Types of STIs

Chlamydia is one of the most common STIs. Symptoms may include abnormal discharge from the vagina or penis and a burning sensation when urinating. Chlamydia from having anal sex can also affect the rectum. This can cause rectal pain, discharge and bleeding. Chlamydia infection can also show no symptoms, so it's important to get tested. In women, untreated chlamydia can make it difficult to get pregnant or cause problems during pregnancy. It can also be passed to their baby during delivery. Chlamydia can be treated and cured with antibiotics, but repeat infections are common.

Syphilis can cause serious health problems. If left untreated, it can spread to the brain and nervous system. It can also cause permanent damage to nerves, vision and/or hearing at any stage. There is currently an outbreak of syphilis in Arizona. Symptoms include sores on the penis, vagina, anus, rectum, lips or mouth. Rashes on the hands and feet may appear as well. In women, syphilis can be passed on to their baby during pregnancy. Syphilis can be treated and cured with antibiotics.

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is the virus that causes AIDS. There is no cure for HIV, but treatments can keep it controlled. If someone gets HIV, they must live with it for the rest of their lives. HIV can be transmitted from a pregnant person to their baby, so it's important to get proper treatment.



Take advantage of your Member Handbook

Your Mercy Care Member Handbook has everything you need to know about your health plan, including:

- Benefit restrictions outside Mercy Care's service area
- Copayments and other charges you may be responsible for
- How to file a complaint, grievance or appeal
- How we make decisions about your care (called Utilization Management)
- How we evaluate new technology as a covered benefit
- Notice of privacy practices
- Your member rights and responsibilities

The Member Handbook is updated every year. If there are major changes, we will send you a letter about it at least 30 days before the changes are effective.

You can view your Member Handbook online.

Prefer a hard copy? Call Member Services to have one mailed to you. Let us know if you need it in another language, a larger font or other formats.

HEALTH MATTERS is published for Mercy Care DCS CHP members.

4750 S. 44th Place, Suite 150,
Phoenix, AZ 85040.

This is general health information and should not replace the advice or care you get from your provider. Always ask your provider about your own health care needs.

Mercy Care is administered by Aetna Medicaid Administrators, LLC, an Aetna company.

Call Mercy Care DCS CHP Member Services Monday through Friday, 8 AM to 5 PM, at **1-602-212-4983** or **1-833-711-0776** (TTY **711**).

Or call the 24-hour nurse line: **1-602-212-4983** or **1-833-711-0776**.

MercyCareAZ.org

Nondiscrimination Notice

Mercy Care DCS CHP complies with applicable federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex. Mercy Care DCS CHP does not exclude people or treat them differently because of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, health status or need for health care services.

Mercy Care DCS CHP:

- Provides no-cost aids and services to people with disabilities to communicate effectively with us, such as:
 - Qualified sign language interpreters
 - Written information in other formats (large print, audio, accessible electronic formats, other formats)
- Provides no-cost language services to people whose primary language is not English, such as:
 - Qualified interpreters
 - Information written in other languages

If you need a qualified interpreter, written information in other formats, translation or other services, call the number on the member's ID card or **1-800-385-4104 (TTY:711)**.

If you believe that Mercy Care DCS CHP has failed to provide these services or discriminated in another way on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex, you can file a grievance with our Civil Rights Coordinator at:

Address:	Attn: Civil Rights Coordinator 4750 S. 44th Place, Ste. 150 Phoenix, AZ 85040
Telephone:	1-888-234-7358 (TTY 711)
Email:	MedicaidCRCoordinator@MercyCareAZ.org

You can file a grievance in person or by mail or email. If you need help filing a grievance, our Civil Rights Coordinator is available to help you.

You can also file a civil rights complaint with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights electronically through the Office for Civil Rights Complaint Portal, available at <https://ocrportal.hhs.gov/ocr/portal/lobby.jsf>, or by mail or phone at: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 200 Independence Avenue, SW Room 509F, HHH Building, Washington, D.C. 20201, 1-800-368-1019, 1-800-537-7697 (TDD).

Complaint forms are available at <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/office/file/index.html>.

This notice is available on the Mercy Care website at

<https://www.mercycareaz.org/content/dam/mercycare/pdf/MercyCare-1557-Notice-16Tags-020421-ua1.pdf>.

ENGLISH: ATTENTION: If you speak English, language assistance services, free of charge, are available to you. Call the number on the back of your ID card or **1-800-385-4104 (TTY: 711)**.

Navajo: Díí baa akó nínízin: Díí saad bee yánífti’go Diné Bizaad, saad bee áká’ánída’áwo’déę́, t’áá jiik’eh, éí ná hóló, koi’ hódíílnih **1-800-385-4104 (TTY 711)**.

VIETNAMESE: CHÚ Ý: nếu bạn nói tiếng việt, có các dịch vụ hỗ trợ ngôn ngữ miễn phí dành cho bạn. Hãy gọi số có ở mặt sau thẻ id của bạn hoặc **1-800-385-4104** (TTY: **711**).

TAGALOG: PAUNAWA: Kung nagsasalita ka ng wikang Tagalog, mayroon kang magagamit na mga libreng serbisyo para sa tulong sa wika. Tumawag sa numero na nasa likod ng iyong ID card o sa **1-800-385-4104 (TTY: 711)**.

FRENCH: ATTENTION: si vous parlez français, des services d'aide linguistique vous sont proposés gratuitement. Appelez le numéro indiqué au verso de votre carte d'identité ou le **1-800-385-4104 (ATS: 711)**.

GERMAN: ACHTUNG: Wenn Sie deutschen sprechen, können Sie unseren kostenlosen Sprachservice nutzen. Rufen Sie die Nummer auf der Rückseite Ihrer ID-Karte oder **1-800-385-4104** (TTY: **711**) an.

RUSSIAN: ВНИМАНИЕ: если вы говорите на русском языке, вам могут предоставить бесплатные услуги перевода. Позвоните по номеру, указанному на обратной стороне вашей идентификационной карточки, или по номеру **1-800-385-4104** (TTY: **711**).

JAPANESE: 注意事項:日本語をお話になる方は、無料で言語サポートのサービスをご利用いただけます。IDカード裏面の電話番号、または**1-800-385-4104 (TTY: 711)**までご連絡ください。

PERSIAN: اگر به زبان فارسی صحبت می کنید، به صورت رایگان می توانید به خدمات کمک زبانی دسترسی داشته باشید. با شماره 1-800-385-4104 (TTY: 711) تماس بگیرید.

[illegible]

SERBO-CROATIAN: OBAVEŠTENJE: Ako govorite srpski, usluge jezičke pomoći dostupne su vam besplatno. Pozovite broj na poleđini vaše identifikacione kartice ili broj **1-800-385-4104** (TTY – telefon za osobe sa oštećenim govorom ili sluhom: **711**).

SOMALI: FEEJIGNAAN: Haddii af-Soomaali aad ku hadasho, adeegyada gargaarka luqadda, oo bilaash ah, ayaad heli kartaa. Wac lambarka ku qoran dhabarka dambe ee kaarkaaga aqoonsiga ama **1-800-385-4104** (Kuwa Magalka ku Adag **711**).

THAI: ข้อควรระวัง: ถ้าคุณพูดภาษาไทย คุณสามารถใช้บริการช่วยเหลือทางภาษาได้ฟรี
โทรติดต่อหมายเลขที่อยู่ด้านหลังบัตร ID ของคุณ หรือหมายเลข **1-800-385-4104 (TTY: 711)**