

Excellus Blue Cross Blue Shield Previous Updates:

December 30th, 2023

Dear Patients,

We are grateful to announce that, thanks to your amazing advocacy, we expect to receive an extension of our in-network status with Excellus BCBS through March 31, 2024.

We continue to work diligently toward a long-term contract.

We cannot thank you enough for your support and look forward to seeing you at your upcoming appointments! Please continue to reach out to strongly encourage Excellus to offer us a long-term contract at our current rates, so that we may continue providing top notch Dermatology care to you and your families.

Cheers to a bright 2024 from our family to yours!

Sincerely yours,
Dermatology Associates of Ithaca

December 26th, 2023

Dear Patients,

We hope you and your loved ones enjoyed a healthy and happy holiday! Unfortunately, as of today and in spite of our patients' incredible advocacy and our ongoing efforts to negotiate a fair and sustainable rate, Excellus BCBS continues to demand a significant pay cut for us to stay in their network.

You may receive a letter from Excellus advising that even if our practice is terminated from their network, you may use your out-of-network benefits to access care. As your trusted Dermatology provider, we are honored to care for you and your family and wish to continue doing so regardless of our network status. And if our practice is terminated from the network, we will do all we can to help make our care accessible—including submitting any claims to Excellus BCBS as a courtesy to you.

However, as an advocate for our patients, our practice strongly objects to Excellus transitioning our patients to “out of network” benefits which mean higher out of pocket costs for our patients—who along with their employers have already paid so much in annually increasing premiums—and who deserve to have all necessary medical costs covered by their insurance plan.

As we have maintained throughout this process, our practice is totally willing to remain in network with Excellus provided that Excellus continues to reimburse our team at the same rates they have already paid for the past year.

Warmly and with deep gratitude,
Dermatology Associates of Ithaca

December 13th, 2023

Dear Patients,

We want to first thank you for going above and beyond for our practice! We cannot tell you how much this means to us. We also wanted to let you know that you may hear from Excellus about our practice requesting overly high reimbursements or about another dermatologist accepting new patients in Ithaca. We are simply requesting to be reimbursed the same rates as the other dermatologists in Ithaca. It makes sense, and is fair and equitable, to be paid the same for doing the same work.

The other dermatologist that Excellus states is open to new patients is actually not accepting new Medicare patients, even if they have BCBS secondary, and also does not accept any of the many safety net insurances that the neediest patients in our community have (and which our practice accepts)--including BCBS safety net, Empire Plan, Fidelis, Molina, or Medicaid. And while the other dermatologist works only part-time, our team of 5 providers is accessible full time 5 days a week and dedicated to being here for our patients and community for decades to come.

As always, please reach out with questions anytime!

Warmly,
Dermatology Associates of Ithaca

December 6th, 2023

Dear Patients,

As you may know, Excellus Blue Cross Blue Shield is scheduled to exclude us as a participating in-network provider soon (12/31/23). This means your out of pocket expense will increase.

Thanks to all of you who have reached out to Excellus with calls and emails but as yet they have been to no avail. The deadline for the change to out of network is fast approaching and we would like to ask for one more push!

Please consider emailing a letter (easy-to-use template below) that we remain an in network provider in order to have continued access to and choice of treatment.

The deadline of 12/31/2023 is fast approaching.

If our remaining in the Excellus BCBS network is important to you, here is what you can do: please call or email CEO Jim Reed at Excellus (main phone 315-671-6400 and ask for CEO Jim Reed's office, email jim.reed@excellus.com) and send the easy-to-use email template below.

Warmly and with thanks,
Dermatology Associates of Ithaca

Instructions:

Please feel free to customize and add a personal story for added impact!

Please address email to the below and please Cc your Human Resources Department:

To: jim.reed@excellus.com

Cc: tony.vitagliano@excellus.com, office@ithacaderm.com

- If you are an employee of a County or of TC3, please also Cc: edowd@tompkins-co.org

- If you are an employee of a School District, please also Cc: Kcooper@tstboces.org

Email Template to Excellus:

Dear Mr. Reed,

As a patient of DAI, I am writing to strongly encourage you to retain Dermatology Associates of Ithaca in the Excellus Blue Cross Blue Shield provider network. As your customer I expect

choice, access to and continuity of care. Due to Ithaca's geographic isolation, removing this independent provider will limit my ability to receive dermatology care.

I am asking that Excellus renew its contract at its current rates with Dermatology Associates of Ithaca so that I can continue to have access to high quality care and a choice of providers.

Thank you,

First and Last Name [must match name on insurance card]:

Excellus Member ID Number:

Address:

Helpful Points to Make when Calling Mr. Reed's office

- The providers at Dermatology Associates of Ithaca are the only full-time Dermatology providers in Ithaca, and the only Dermatology providers in Cortland
- There are no other Dermatology providers able to take over the care of the thousands of patients happily under the care of the five top notch full time providers at Dermatology Associates of Ithaca
- Skin conditions require long-term management, and losing access to Dermatology care would mean worsening of skin disease and endangering the health of thousands of patients
- Urgent skin problems require immediate attention to prevent them from worsening, and Dermatology Associates of Ithaca provides urgent appointments and teledermatology access when patients need it.

- It saves Excellus thousands of dollars per Emergency Room / Urgent Care visit avoided, and skin cancers are least expensive to treat when caught early!

October 16th, 2023

Dear Patients,

Thank you for your patience as we advocate to continue our contract with Excellus. Although you may have received a letter from Excellus suggesting continued network coverage, the language is misleading as our current contract is set to terminate on December 31, 2023 and—in spite of truly heartwarming advocacy by patients and community organizations on our behalf—Excellus has still not offered us a fair contract for January 1, 2024 onward.

As we cannot guarantee we will be in network beyond December 31, 2023, if you wish to be guaranteed coverage for care in our office beyond this date, we urge you to contact your Human Resources Department to see if they will offer you an alternative insurer. At the time of this writing, we participate with every other insurance.

As we have done throughout this process, our team will continue to do all we can to remain accessible and sustainable for our valued patients.

Warmly,
Dermatology Associates of Ithaca

P.S. If you have Medicare as your primary insurance, your care will continue to be covered regardless of our Excellus BCBS network status; however, if you would like to explore other options, expert consultant Shelby Wadsworth would be happy to help you free of charge:

<https://forms.gle/fj2d65Vd8Ga7...>

August 30, 2023

Dear Patients,

We are happy to announce that thanks to your many phone calls and emails, Excellus BlueCross BlueShield has extended our contract through the end of this year to December 31, 2023! **However, we still need a contract for 2024 which is rapidly approaching.**

As your advocacy truly makes a difference, please continue to call (number on the back of your card) or email (link to contact form below) Excellus to encourage them to extend us a **long-term contract** so that our practice may stay **in network at our current rates.**

Please do not hesitate to let us know if you have any questions or concerns. As always, we will continue to do all we can to keep providing excellent care to our patients and community!

Warmly and with deep thanks,
Dermatology Associates of Ithaca

Online Form for contacting Excellus:

https://www.excellusbcbbs.com/eform?form_name=contact_us&fmi=5

August 21, 2023

Dear Patients,

We are grateful for your many phone calls to Excellus on behalf of our patients, practice, and community! We are thankful for the extension of our current rates through September 30, 2023; however, with our commitment to providing stable long-term Dermatology care for our patients, our patients and practice need a long-term contract. Please know that despite what you may hear, we are NOT asking for higher rates than other practices in Ithaca, only a continuation of our current rates.

At this point it would be most helpful if you could call the number on the back of your Excellus card or send a message through the below online form to reiterate the importance of continuing your care in network, at our current rates in a long-term contract, with Dermatology Associates of Ithaca.

Please feel free to reach out to us with any questions or concerns anytime.

Warmly and with appreciation,
Dermatology Associates of Ithaca

Online Form for contacting Excellus:

https://www.excellusbcs.com/eform?form_name=contact_us&fmi=5

July 1st, 2023

Dear Patients,

We are happy to announce that, after many calls and emails from our wonderful patients and local employers, Excellus Blue Cross Blue Shield (“Excellus”) has agreed to keep our practice in network through the end of September 2023.

What this means for you as a patient is that there will be no change in your coverage for care with our practice through the end of September 2023.

We are thrilled to be able to continue caring for our Excellus patients in network, and deeply grateful for everyone’s support and advocacy; however, knowing that we face termination if an agreement is not reached by the end of September, we encourage you and your employers to please continue to advocate with Excellus.

Our community needs Dermatology care and our team deserves to be paid fairly, not to take a pay cut for doing the same work—let’s make sure Excellus knows this and preserves access to this valuable service to our patients and community.

Excellus BCBS Phone: Please use the customer care number on the back of your card. Excellus BCBS Contact Page: <https://www.excellusbcbs.com/e...>

Warmly and with gratitude, Josephine McAllister, MD FAAD

June 23, 2023

A Message from our Lead Physician Dr. Josephine McAllister

Dear Patients,

We greatly value you and your families and are proud to provide dermatological care to all of you who have become like a family to all of us. We would like to take this opportunity to inform those with Excellus Blue Cross Blue Shield (“Excellus”) insurance that you may receive a notification from Excellus stating that, effective July 1, 2023, Dermatology Associates of Ithaca will no longer be part of its provider network. It is important to note that Excellus’ decision is a result of many factors completely outside of our control. At the present time, we are doing everything in our power to maintain our status with Excellus.

We will continue to do our best to negotiate in good faith with Excellus BCBS and will keep you updated on the situation. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this situation, please feel free to contact Excellus BCBS at (315) 798-4200 or your Human Resources department.

For now, our practice remains in network with Excellus BCBS. As this is an unprecedented situation, our team will be available to answer any questions that arise and to help and support our patients through the process. As always, we look forward to providing you and all of our patients with our very best care.

Sincerely yours,
Josephine C. McAllister, MD FAAD

FAQ's:

1. Why is Dermatology Associates of Ithaca renegotiating its insurance contracts?

In December 2022, our practice was unilaterally and suddenly terminated from Cayuga Health Partners—a previously collaborative association between local physicians and Cayuga Medical Center. In our view, the termination was the culmination of over a decade of pressure from Cayuga Medical Center and its representatives that we refer certain pathology services to providers in the association rather than to those that we feel, in our professional opinion, provide the best care.

2. Why has Excellus BCBS not offered Dermatology Associates of Ithaca a signable contract?

All of the major insurance carriers have extended the same rates to our practice as when we were part of Cayuga Health Partners--with the exception of Excellus Blue Cross Blue Shield. Our team members have been here for our patients through the pandemic and do not deserve a major pay cut while providing the same high quality care.

Dermatology Associates of Ithaca accepts the following insurance care plans*:

- √ Aetna
- √ Excellus BlueShield BlueCross
- √ The Empire Plan
- √ GHI
- √ HealthNow
- √ Independent Health

- √ Martin's Point (US Family Health Plan)
- √ Medicare (Free help for your Medicare questions, <https://forms.gle/fj2d65Vd8Ga7...>)
- √ Medicaid
- √ MVP/Cigna
- √ UMR
- √ Lifetime Benefits Solutions
- √ Wellcare Medicare
- √ Molina Healthcare

*While we try to be as informed as possible of our insurance partners, we do not know everything about every insurance plan. It is the responsibility of the patient to check with their insurance company to make sure our office is in network and their visit will be covered.

Have a balance? We are pleased to offer three easy ways to pay your bill!

1) Click here to pay online: <https://mcallister.ema.md/ema/pay/onlinepay>

2) Call our friendly billing team at: (607) 220-8411

(Please leave a message and someone will return your call!)

3) Mail your payment to:

Dermatology Associates of Ithaca, Billing Department
PO Box 91
Solvay NY 13209-0091

The Dermatology Associates of Ithaca team is dedicated to providing patients with the best possible care including high quality billing services through our partner [MedSelect](#) .