

Referrals

Referral System Responsibility

When a Molina Healthcare of New Mexico, Inc. (Molina Healthcare) Member requires the services of another practitioner/provider, the Primary Care Practitioner (PCP) is responsible for referring the Member for services to a participating practitioner/provider. To be eligible for Molina Healthcare benefits, all services the Member receives must be provided or approved by the PCP except certain approved self-referral services.

It is not necessary for PCPs to provide a referral for Members to access obstetrics/gynecology (OB/GYN) services. Members may self-refer to an in-plan OB/GYN.

Notification is necessary for OB/GYN pregnancy care. Practitioners must notify the health plan at the time of the first prenatal visit. Molina Healthcare requires early notification to ensure high-risk pregnancies are case managed appropriately. Please refer to the attachment in Section N, Preventive Health Guidelines for detailed information on the Early Pregnancy Identification Program, and how practitioners may receive a financial incentive for notifying Molina Healthcare of pregnancy.

The PCP is an essential part of the referral process. Only the PCP knows his/her patients, their diagnoses, and the specialists who can best provide care for them. It is extremely important that the PCP continue to manage referred patient's care. The PCP's training and knowledge gives him/her the best perspective for the global view of health service delivery. It is essential that he/she understand the limits of medicine's capacity to treat patients and is willing to follow patient's outcomes, particularly in view of different practitioners/providers of specialty services.

Using local specialists over remote referral services will enhance coordination of care. When referring for non-urgent diagnostic problems, it is prudent to request only one visit with the expectation that the specialty practitioner/provider should afford you a treatment plan for that patient. Future care should be discussed with the patient to assure that his/her needs and preferences are being met. Try to avoid a wide-open "treat as necessary" referral. For surgical or therapeutic services, it may be appropriate to allow the practitioner/provider of those specialty services to complete their treatment, and have a follow-up scheduled at a prescribed time, such as one month, to evaluate a need for any further services before authorization.

PCP Responsibility

Molina Healthcare has an in-plan referral process. It is designed to eliminate the need for Molina Healthcare involvement when you, the PCP, determine that a Member needs to see an in-plan specialist.

The goal of the changed process is to increase communication between the PCPs and the specialists caring for Molina Healthcare Members by eliminating the time consuming process of obtaining a referral approval from Molina Healthcare.

Referrals (*continued*)

The following is an outline of the referral process:

- A Molina Healthcare Member's PCP determines that a Member needs to see a specialist;
- The PCP determines which in-plan specialist is appropriate to see the Member;
- The PCP determines the initial number of visits that the specialist should see the Member;
- The PCP or his/her designee completes an optional referral form, a similar form of his/her own design, or a prescription pad. The PCP may also call the specialist with the referral, but should document the referral in the Member's record;
- The PCP's office may fax the form to the specialist who will be providing the consult;
- The original is placed in the Member's chart after having been faxed to the specialist who is being asked to see the Member;
- A copy of the referral is placed in the Member's chart at the specialist's office;
- **MOLINA HEALTHCARE DOES NOT NEED TO RECEIVE NOTIFICATION OF IN-PLAN REFERRALS;**
- The specialist does not need a Molina Healthcare referral number to submit with the claim;
- The specialist is required to complete the "referring physician" box number seventeen (17) on the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) – 1500 (08/05) form with the name of the referring PCP;
- The claim is then submitted as the normal practice;
- Referrals to out-of-plan practitioners/providers **require prior authorization** and requests for visits to an out-of-plan practitioner/provider must be submitted for approval on Molina Healthcare's prior authorization form; and
- Molina Healthcare will verify referrals during the regular Medical Record Reviews.

Specialty Practitioner/Provider Responsibility

- The specialty practitioner/provider must provide specialty care for no more than the time period or number of visits indicated on the referral;
- The specialty practitioner/provider may perform the necessary diagnostic evaluation for the referral period, including ordering any appropriate lab tests, imaging, and radiation therapy. If the Member requires a procedure for which prior authorization is required, the specialty practitioner/provider is responsible for obtaining the proper authorization from Molina Healthcare;
- The specialty practitioner/provider shall ensure that services provided are documented and incorporated into the Member's primary care record;
- In order for the specialist to be reimbursed, he/she should verify that a referral has been written; and
- A specialist may **not** issue referrals to other specialists. The specialist should go back through the PCP to refer a Member to another specialist (**An OB/GYN may refer to another specialist for gynecological and maternity related issues**).

Referrals (*continued*)

Orchestration of Health Care Referrals

PCP

The PCP is the best starting point for effective care. PCPs have a well-rounded view of health care and can efficiently treat ninety to ninety-five (90-95%) percent of all medical problems. He/she knows the patient more broadly than any other practitioner/provider and is in the best position to know what other health needs the patient may have.

Local Specialist Referrals

New Mexico has many excellent specialists who are capable of treating most of the diseases not managed by the PCP.

Regional Referrals

On rare occasions, unusual diseases or complications require referral to out-of-state facilities that offer the most ideal treatment. For purposes of communication, university centers within New Mexico and neighboring states have served us well. All out-of-plan referrals **require prior authorization**.

Remote Referrals

On very rare occasions, referrals to specialty care centers are indicated. This is best facilitated by the PCP, local specialists, and the Molina Healthcare Medical Director. The patient may be referred to a national center of excellence as may be required by the situation. All out-of-plan referrals **require prior authorization**.

UNMPALS Program

The University of New Mexico (UNM) Physician Access Line (PALS) (UNMPALS) is a consultation and referral service offered by the University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center. The PALS toll free number is operational twenty-four (24) hours a day, seven days a week, and was created in response to the growing need for community physicians to reach UNM physicians quickly. PALS provides opportunities for practicing physicians and faculty to assist one another in the diagnosis and care for patients.

Referrals (*continued*)

The Practitioner-to-Practitioner Connection

As a practitioner, a PALS referral specialist will receive your call. Each of the referral specialists has access to UNM's practitioner schedules, on-call lists, and telephone and pager numbers necessary to promptly reach the practitioner.

If you wish to speak with a specific practitioner, and he/she is unavailable, the referral specialist will direct you to an available practitioner or arrange for the requested practitioner to return your call.

PALS is Simple and Secure

As a PALS representative, the referral specialist is responsible for every call being completed to your satisfaction. The referral specialist is available to help you with any needed arrangements.

Continuing Medical Education (CME) Information and Reservations

You can utilize PALS to request information regarding UNM seminars or CME in your area of interest. PALS representatives have current listings and can assist you in registering for those seminars you choose to attend.

Toll free: (888) UNM-PALS

Continental United States toll free: (888) 866-7257

In Albuquerque: (505) 272-2000