



Utilization Management Policy: Direct Specialty Referral

Effective: 1/1/2011, 2/2012; 6/2012
Reviewed/Revised: 2/2013; 4/2013; 11/2013,
01/22/2014; 03/31/2014; 02/24/15; 05/11/15;
10/15/15; 12/11/15; 02/11/15; 02/11/16; 5/12/16;
8/11/16; 2/9/17; 8/10/17; 2/8/18; 2/16/18; 2/23/18;
2/28/18; 5/10/18; 8/9/18; 11/8/18; 1/3/19

DIRECT SPECIALTY REFERRAL

Purpose: The purpose of the expansion of the direct specialty referral for **VCHCP** members is to facilitate member referrals from contracted providers to contracted specialists for consultation, follow up visits and subsequent in office and non-in office procedures and diagnostic testing. A specific referral process and referral form has been developed and provided to primary care providers for use in making direct referrals.

Policy: The direct specialty referral allows contracted Primary Care Physicians to directly refer members to certain contracted specialty providers for an initial consult and appropriate follow up visits without requiring a Treatment Authorization Request (TAR) submission and prior authorization from the Health Plan. Additionally, specialists can perform certain procedures during the initial consultation and follow up visits without prior authorization from the Health Plan. Previously, requests for additional visits beyond two (2) follow up visits either from the Primary Care Physician or from the Specialist required prior authorization. However, now, any follow up visits will not require prior authorization as long as the member has seen the specialist within a rolling year and the visit is for the original problem. If the member has not seen the specialist for a year, or if the member requires a consultation for a new problem, a new direct specialty referral form will be required from the primary care physician. Any associated procedures not listed below will continue to require prior authorization as they did previously. In addition, urgent care and Emergency Room (ER) physicians may now directly refer members to Orthopedics specialty for urgently required consultation.

Neurologists can directly refer to VCMC Pain Management Specialists, Physiatrists [Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Specialist (PM&R)] and Orthopedics. VCMC Pain Management Specialists and Physiatrists (PM&R) can directly refer to Orthopedics. VCMC Pain Management Specialists and Physiatrists (PM&R) can refer back and forth based on the type of referral and access.

Neurosurgery can directly refer to VCMC Pain Management Specialists, Physiatrists [Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Specialist (PM&R), Neurology and Orthopedics. VCMC Pain Management Specialists, Physiatrists (PM&R), Neurology and Orthopedics can refer back and forth based on the type of referral and access.



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VCMC Pain Management Specialists and VCMC Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Specialist (PM&R) can directly refer members for pain management injections to Santa Paula Hospital Interventional Radiology.

Physical therapy and occupational therapy will be allowed a direct referral for an initial evaluation and an additional seven (7) visits up to a total of eight (8) visits.

In addition, nutritional counseling may be directly referred.

In addition to primary care physicians, direct referral for physical therapy can be made by the following specialists: Orthopedics, Rheumatology, Neurosurgery, Neurology, Podiatry, Physiatry (physical medicine and rehabilitation) and VCMC Pain Management. Once the Health Plan authorizes a Hand/Plastic Surgery specialist to see a VCHCP member, the Hand/Plastic Surgery Specialist may directly refer the member to physical therapy and to occupational therapy.

Background: Previously all requests for initial consultation and two (2) follow up visits with all specialty providers including all the procedures performed by the specialists during these said visits as well as additional follow up office visits, required prior authorization from the Health Plan.

Procedure: All VCHCP contracted specialists can be directly referred by PCPs using the direct referral form [EXCLUDING TERTIARY REFERRALS, (e.g. UCLA AND CHLA), PERINATOLOGY and OFFICE PROCEDURES FOR NON VCMC PAIN MANAGEMENT SPECIALISTS]. Referrals to Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy also use this form. In addition, referrals to nutritional counseling also use this form.

Note that this policy does not apply to any tertiary care or non-contracted provider referrals. All tertiary care referrals and referrals to non-contracted providers continue to require approval by the Health Plan through the TAR procedure.

The Plan's primary care providers have been provided a two (2) part referral authorization form. The referring provider or office completes the form. Part 1 is given to the member to be taken to the specialist or treatment facility when the member presents for the first visit. Part 2 is maintained by the primary care provider. The Primary Care Provider may also directly fax the direct specialty referral form to the specialist.



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The following are Procedures and Services included with Direct Referrals and do not require prior authorization from the specialists. Once the specialists are seeing the members, there is no authorization required for these procedures and services. Primary care physicians and specialists not mentioned below continues to require prior authorization for these procedures and services listed below. Note: these are applicable for Contracted Providers' offices and Selected Facilities Only.

	SPECIALTY	
1	Allergy	All allergy services
2	Cardiology	Office Procedure: EKG Facilities Treatment (i.e. VCMC Clinic): Exercise stress echo, echocardiogram, doppler echo, trans-thoracic echo, doppler echo (pulse wave used in conjunction with doppler echo, exercise stress test (not thallium), stress tests (all kinds) for chest pain, holter monitor for arrhythmias, 2D-echo with Doppler for CHF.
3	Dermatology	Office Procedures: destruction of lesions by any method and repair, biopsy and excision of lesions and repair, Moh's procedures except when plastic surgery is required for closure.
4	Endocrinology	Office Procedure: Thyroid FNA biopsy; Diabetes Medical Services at Las Islas Family Medical Group such as Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT), Group Education Counseling. –and Diabetes Outpatient Self-Management Training,
5	ENT	Office or Facilities Treatment: oronasal endoscopy, laryngoscopy Office Procedures: removal of cerumen, nasal endoscopy, use of binocular microscope, nasopharyngoscopy, removal of foreign body from EAC, excision of lesion vestibule of mouth without repair, biopsy of anterior tongue, biopsy of lip, excision of tongue lesion without closure, biopsy of floor of mouth, biopsy of oropharynx, I&D of peritonsillar abscess, control of nasal hemorrhage, anterior, simple fine needle aspiration of thyroid without image guidance, thyroid core biopsy, adult tympanostomy tube placement under local anesthesia; audiometry testing.
6	Gastroenterology	Facilities Procedure: Colonoscopy Screening and diagnostic colonoscopy
7	General Surgery	Office Procedures: needle biopsy, excision of lesions (non-cosmetic)
8	Hematology-Oncology	CBC & Ferritin laboratory services
9	Neurology	Office Procedures: EMG-NCV, EEG
10	Neurosurgery	Office Procedures: EMG-NCV, EEG
11	Obstetrics/ Gynecology	Office Procedures: Colposcopy and biopsy, endometrial biopsy, insertion and removal of IUD's for contraception, insertion of mirena for control of menorrhagia or endometrial hyperplasia, vulvar biopsy, insertion of nexplanon.
12	Ophthalmology	Office Procedures: medical examination and evaluation/treatment, visual field examination, ophthalmic diagnostic imaging, ophthalmic biometry, glaucoma testing,



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		ophthalmoscopy, fluorescein angiography and fundus photography with interpretation and report, diabetic retinal screening.
13	Oral & Maxillofacial	Orthopantomogram (panoramic x-ray)
14	Orthopedics	Office Procedures: arthrocentesis, steroid injections, fracture care including fracture reduction, treatment of dislocations, casting and immobilization, administration of Hyaluronate derivative injections.
15	Pain Management and Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (VCMC SPECIALISTS ONLY)	Office Procedures: trigger point injections, joint aspiration/injection, carpal tunnel injection, nerve block, EMG-NCV, EEG, chemodenervation, facet injection, epidural injection, all with or without image guidance.
16	Plastic Surgery	Biopsies; Steroid injections for trigger finger, scar management and finger joint pathology
17	Podiatry	Office Procedures: Toe nail/nail plate removal; trimming of toenails for diabetic patient; local nerve, tendon sheath and ligament injections of anesthetic and/or steroid; paring/cutting hyperkeratotic lesions; nail debridement; arthrocentesis, aspiration and injection of joint/bursa.
18	Pulmonology	Office Procedures: pulmonary function test, office spirometry, office oximetry.
19	Rheumatology	Office Procedures: joint aspiration/injection
20	Thoracic Surgery/Vascular Surgery	
21	Urology	Office Procedures: cystoscopy for hematuria, prostate ultrasound/biopsy, urethral dilations for stricture, bladder scan/ultrasound for post void residual.
22	Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy	Initial evaluation and additional 7 visits up to a total of 8 visits. Effective 1/1/19, For PT providers, only: Additional 16 physical therapy visits beyond the initial eight (8) direct referral visits will NO LONGER require prior authorization. Requests for additional therapy beyond the 24 visits will require prior authorization with a submission of a TAR form including the initial therapy evaluation and treatment notes. Effective 1/1/19, For OT providers, only: Additional 16 occupational therapy visits beyond the initial eight (8) direct referral visits will NO LONGER require prior authorization. Requests for additional therapy beyond the 24 visits will require prior authorization with a submission of a TAR form including the initial therapy evaluation and treatment notes.

The Primary Care Providers were informed about the Ventura County Medical Center (VCMC) Referral Center Process. Many specialists on the panel of the Plan are specialists in the Ventura County Medical Center (VCMC) medical clinics and affiliated clinics. New appointments for these specialists are made



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through the VCMC Referral Center. These specialties are Audiology, Cardiology, Dermatology, Endocrinology, ENT, Hepatitis C, Infectious Disease, Nephrology, Neurology, Neurosurgery, Pain Management, PMR, Pediatric Neurology, Podiatry, Pulmonology and Rheumatology. For a referral to any of the VCMC physicians in these specialties, the direct referral form should be sent to the VCMC Referral Office via fax or e-Referral system. The fax number is 805-677-5263.

Below is the list of Specialties and providers handled by the VCMC Referral Center:

Cardiology	ENT	GI/ GI Screening/ Positive FIT	Rheumatology
Dr. Abdi-Moradi	Dr. C. Nguyen	Dr. P Sanchez	Dr. Farmani
Dr. Olson	Dr. Sumiyoshi	Dr. Underwood	Dr. Gregor
Dr. Dharawat	Dr. Peters	Dr. Pedraza	Dr. Weiss
Dr. Nitzel	Dr. Morrow-Stewart	Dr. Lin	
Pulmonology	Pediatric Neurology	Pediatric ENT	Pediatric Orthopedics
Dr. Bajawa	Dr. Goldie	Dr. Nguyen	Dr. Early
Dr. Lipper	Dr. Gowrinathan	Dr. Sumiyoshi	Dr. Maguire
	Dr. Koshy	Dr. Peters	
		Dr. Morrow-Stewart	
Podiatry	Orthopedics -VCMC Clinic	Infectious Disease	Endocrinology
Dr. Roberg	Dr. Benson	Dr. Muzaffer	Dr. Ahl
Dr. Stuhr	Dr. Wu		Dr. Pinzone
Dr. Vines	Dr. Hargett		Dr. N Shah
	Dr. Ragsdale		
	Dr. Stennette		
	Dr. Takara		
Hypertension Clinic	Hepatitis C	Renal/Nephrology	
Dr. Leibovitch	Dr. Lyche	Dr. Chang	
	Dr. Muzaffer	Dr. Gandhi	
		Dr. Mapar	
		Dr. Wong	
		Dr. Yan	

- A. Attachments: None
- B. References: None
- C. Reviewers/Authors: Albert Reeves, MD & Faustine Dela Cruz, RN; Date: 1/1/2011
 Committee Review: UM on 2/10/11 & QA on 2/22/11

Reviewed/No Changes by: Faustine Dela Cruz, RN, Cecilia Cabrera-Urango, RN
& Albert Reeves, MD on January 2012

- Committee Review:
 - UM: February 9, 2012; QAC: February 28, 2012

Reviewed/Update by: Faustine Dela Cruz, RN & Albert Reeves, MD on June 2012

- Committee Review:
 - UM: August 16, 2012; QAC: August 28, 2012

Reviewed/No Updates by: Faustine Dela Cruz, RN, Cecilia Cabrera-Urango, RN
& Albert Reeves, MD

- Committee Review:
 - UM: February 14, 2013; QAC: February 26, 2013

Reviewed/Updated by: Faustine Dela Cruz, RN & Albert Reeves, MD on April 2013

- Committee Review:
 - UM: May 9, 2013; QAC: May 28, 2013

Reviewed/Updated by: Faustine Dela Cruz, RN & Albert Reeves, MD on November 2013

- Committee Review:
 - UM: November 14, 2013; QAC: November 26, 2013

Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz & Catherine Sanders, MD on January 2014

- Committee Review:
 - UM: February 13, 2014; QAC: February 25, 2014

Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz & Catherine Sanders, MD on March 2014

- Committee Review:
 - UM: May 8, 2014; QAC: May 27, 2014

Reviewed/Updated by Catherine R. Sanders, MD on January 2, 2015

- Committee Review:
 - UM: February 12, 2015; QAC February 24, 2015

Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz & Catherine Sanders, MD on May 2015

- Committee Review:
 - UM: May 7, 2015; QAC June 2, 2015

Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz & Catherine Sanders, MD on October 2015

- Committee Review:
 - UM: November 12, 2015; QAC November 24, 2015

Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN, Catherine Sanders, MD & Robert Sterling,
MD on December 2015

- Committee Review:
 - UM: February 11, 2016; QAC February 23, 2016

Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN, Catherine Sanders, MD & Robert Sterling,
MD on May 2016

- Committee Review:
 - UM: May 12, 2016; QAC May 24, 2016

Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN, Catherine Sanders, MD & Robert Sterling,
MD on August 2016

- Committee Review:



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- UM: August 11, 2016; QAC August 23, 2016
 Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN, Catherine Sanders, MD & Robert Sterling, MD on February 2017
 - Committee Review:
 - UM: February 9, 2017; QAC February 28, 2017
 Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN, Catherine Sanders, MD & Robert Sterling, MD on August 2017
 - Committee Review:
 - UM: August 10, 2017; QAC August 22, 2017
 Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN, Catherine Sanders, MD & Robert Sterling, MD on February 2018
 - Committee Review:
 - UM: February 8, 2018; QAC February 27, 2018
 Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN, Catherine Sanders, MD & Robert Sterling, MD on May 2018
 - Committee Review:
 - UM: May 10, 2018; QAC May 29, 2018
 Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN, Catherine Sanders, MD & Robert Sterling, MD on August 2018
 - Committee Review:
 - UM: August 9, 2018; QAC August 28, 2018
 Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN & Robert Sterling, MD on November 2018
 - Committee Review:
 - UM: November 8, 2018; QAC November 27, 2018
 Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN & Robert Sterling, MD on January 2019
 - Committee Review:
 - UM: February 14, 2019; QAC February 26, 2019

Revision Date	Content Revised (Yes/No)	Contributors	Review/Revision Notes
2/9/17	Yes	Catherine Sanders, MD; Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN	Annual review; updated with expansion of specialists for direct referral.
8/10/17	Yes	Catherine Sanders, MD; Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN	Added audiometry testing in the procedures ENT can perform in the office as part of the direct referral Added procedures for Plastic Surgery that can be done by specialist as part of the direct referral.
2/8/18	Yes	Catherine Sanders, MD; Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN	Annual review; Added local injections of anesthetic and/or steroid under procedures and services included in the direct referral



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			that the specialists (podiatrist) can perform without prior authorization.
2/16/18	Yes	Catherine Sanders, MD; Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN	Added Oral & Maxillofacial specialty to be able to do orthopantogram (panoramic x-ray) without prior authorization.
2/23/18	Yes	Catherine Sanders, MD; Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN	Updated the services that Podiatrist can perform as part of direct referral without prior authorization
2/28/18	Yes	Catherine Sanders, MD; Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN	Updated the Specialists/providers handled by the VCMC Referral Center
5/3/18	Yes	Catherine Sanders, MD; Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN	Added: Emergency Room (ER) physicians may now directly refer members to Orthopedics specialty for urgently required consultation.
5/29/18	Yes	Catherine Sanders, MD; Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN	Added nutritional counseling to direct referral.
8/8/18	Yes	Catherine Sanders, MD; Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN	VCMC Pain Management Specialists and VCMC Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Specialist (PM&R) can directly refer members for pain management injections to Santa Paula Hospital Interventional Radiology
10/11/18	Yes	Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN	Effective 1/1/19, updated - exclusion for direct referral to contracted Non-VCMC Pain Specialists to office procedures ONLY. Office visits to contracted Non-VCMC Pain Specialists can be directly referred by PCPs.
10/11/18	Yes	Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN	Effective 1/1/19, For PT providers, only: Additional 16 physical therapy visits beyond the initial eight (8) direct referral visits will NO LONGER require prior authorization. Requests for additional therapy beyond the 24 visits will require prior authorization with a submission of a TAR form including the initial therapy evaluation and treatment notes. Effective 1/1/19, For OT providers, only: Additional 16 occupational therapy visits beyond the initial eight (8) direct referral visits will NO LONGER require prior authorization. Requests for additional therapy beyond the 24 visits will require prior authorization with a submission of a



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			TAR form including the initial therapy evaluation and treatment notes.
1/3/19	Yes	Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN	Updated list of Specialties and Providers handled by the VCMC Referral Center Updated to rolling year to this portion of policy: follow up visits will not require prior authorization as long as the member has seen the specialist within a rolling year and the visit is for the original problem.
7/31/19	Yes	Howard Taekman, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN	Neurosurgery can directly refer to VCMC Pain Management Specialists, Physiatrists [Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Specialist (PM&R), Neurology and Orthopedics. VCMC Pain Management Specialists, Physiatrists (PM&R), Neurology and Orthopedics can refer back and forth based on the type of referral and access.