

Policy Number: UM - 130	Policy Name: Referral – Tertiary Care Center
-----------------------------------	--

Cal-Med Connect
 Commercial
 Medicare Advantage
 MediCal

Date Approved by UMC:	On file	Effective Date:	10/2023
		Replacing Policy	NA
Revision Date:	2/2024, 1/2024		
Signature:	(on-file)		

SCOPE:

ASTRANA HEALTH and its affiliated entities, globally referred to as “ASTRANA HEALTH” shall follow the procedures set forth in this policy.

PURPOSE:

To establish medical necessity guidelines for the appropriate use of Tertiary Care Center services.

DEFINITION:

Tertiary care center - is defined as specialized consultative care provided by specialists working in a center that has personnel and facilities for special investigation and treatment of complicated medical conditions. Patients are usually referred by primary or secondary care personnel.

Secondary care - is provided by a specialist physician who acts as a consultant at the request of the primary care physician.

Tertiary care - refers to highly specialized medical care usually over an extended period of time that involves advanced and complex procedures and treatments performed by medical specialists in state-of-the-art facilities.

Tertiary Level of Care Referrals:

If ASTRANA HEALTH/IPA network is unable to provide the requested service within the contracted Provider Network, the PCP may request a referral to a tertiary level of care practitioner/facility.

ASTRANA HEALTH considers the following referrals to tertiary care centers as medically necessary:

1. Referrals generated from specialists in the community who document a medical need for a higher level of care in the form of a specialized diagnostic approach, treatment, or procedure.
2. Referrals when a continuity of care issue is documented and meets regulatory requirements for continuity of care coverage. For example, if the member is in the midst of management of an acute medical need, and the member has seen the tertiary care provider within the last 12 months, referral authorization for continued follow up would be indicated. The provider must be willing to accept contract rates from the health plan and not have documented quality of care concerns.
3. Referrals whose redirection may result in delay of necessary medical treatment. Ancillary medical requests (e.g., radiology, laboratory studies) must be considered for adequate coverage in alternative settings or redirections that could result in potential delays in treatment decisions.
4. Referrals to secondary specialties related to the primary specialty at a tertiary care center where continuity of care exists. For example, a Member with NYHA Class IV congestive heart failure may be followed by a tertiary care center cardiologist. If the Member also has co-morbid pulmonary hypertension requiring pulmonary specialty consultation, approving the tertiary pulmonary consultation would be appropriate to allow for multi-disciplinary collaboration in the Member's overall care plan.
5. Requests for consultation with specialties that have limited access in the community or that are not available in the community network setting. For example, the following specialties should be considered for tertiary care level approval: neuro-oncology, surgical-oncology, gynecologic-oncology, neuro-surgery and perinatology.
6. The PCP must follow this policy when a member requires a tertiary level of care practitioner/facility referral.
7. ASTRANA HEALTH UM department and/or the ASTRANA HEALTH Medical Director or designee will establish the presence of medical necessity.
8. When medical necessity is established and the service cannot be provided within the ASTRANA HEALTH Provider network, the referral will be approved as medically indicated.

Use of tertiary level of care practitioner/facility if no in network practitioner/facility is an option or if no in network practitioner/facility has appropriate clinical expertise, because ASTRANA HEALTH is deciding if it is or is not medically necessary for the member to receive tertiary level of care.

Redirection (Tertiary Level of Care):

Requests for a tertiary level of care practitioner/facility are reviewed and determined based on medical necessity. When medical necessity has been established, ASTRANA HEALTH will then approve the requested service(s) at a tertiary level only in the below circumstances.

ASTRANA HEALTH considers the following requests to tertiary centers as appropriate for potential redirection to community-based specialist:

- Hematology/Oncology consultation for cancers that by available documentation do not demonstrate advanced stages or metastasis, and/or rare or aggressive cancer types.
- Specialty requests for consultations when specialists with appropriate access standards that can provide equivalent services are available in the community.
- Tertiary care center requests for ancillary services (e.g., radiology or laboratory testing) that will not result in delay of treatment or coordination of care.
- Specialty consultation requests that do not therapeutically relate to another specialty for which the member is being followed in a tertiary care center, and for which a community-based specialist has appropriate access and can provide equivalent services.
- Tertiary care requests for continued follow up of stable members in the maintenance phase of their medical condition. A community-based specialist of the same discipline with appropriate access and equivalent services may be considered for redirection of stable members in the maintenance phase of their medical condition.
- Services cannot be provided within the ASTRANA HEALTH non-tertiary level Provider Network
- No in-network practitioner/facility is available to evaluate and treat your condition.
- No in-network practitioner/facility has appropriate clinical expertise or necessary equipment.

When the above circumstances are not in place, ASTRANA HEALTH will redirect the tertiary level of care request to the ASTRANA HEALTH non-tertiary provider network.

Religious Considerations

ASTRANA HEALTH UM staff arrange for timely referral and coordination of covered services based on the member's religious or theical objections to perform or otherwise support.

ASTRANA HEALTH does not charge for arranging, coordinating and ensuring provision of services .

Service includes but are not limited to:

- Vaccines
- Blood transfusions
- Specified surgeries

COVERAGE LIMITATIONS AND EXCLUSIONS

Tertiary facility located within the service area should be attempted first when medically appropriate. Requests for specific tertiary centers (either within or outside the network) may be subject to redirection to another tertiary care center with regards to access that may be based on the following factors: Non-contracted tertiary center requests will be redirected to contracted tertiary centers that can provide equivalent services, cost-effective, more efficient, and expedient access to care at another redirected center.

References:

1. California Health and Safety Code §1383.15.
2. Department of Health Care Services All Plan Letter 22-032, Continuity of Care for Medi-Cal Beneficiaries Who Newly Enroll in Medi-Cal Managed Care from Medi-Cal Fee-For-Service, and for Medi-Cal Members Who Transition into a New Medi-Cal Managed Care Health Plan On or After January 01, 2023, December 27, 2022.
3. Encyclopedia.com, <http://www.encyclopedia.com/caregiving/dictionaries-thesauruses-pictures-and-press-releases/tertiary-care>, accessed on February 05, 2023.
4. National Center for Biotechnology Information, US National Library of Medicine. Tertiary Care Centers. Accessed February 05, 2023. at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/mesh?Db=mesh&term=Tertiary+Care+Centers>
5. Tertiary care. Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster. Retrieved on December 2 2020 from, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tertiary%20care>
6. Tertiary Care Center. National Center for Biotechnology Information. Retrieved on December 4 2020 from www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/mesh/68062606
7. Tertiary healthcare. National Center for Biotechnology Information. Retrieved on December 2 2020 from www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/mesh/68063128
8. Tertiary healthcare. (n.d.) McGraw-Hill Concise Dictionary of Modern Medicine. (2002). Retrieved December 4 2020 from <https://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Tertiary+healthcare>