Primary Care Providers (PCPs)

Definition

Primary Care Provider (PCP) — A physician (M.D.) or osteopathic physician (D.O.) board-trained or board-certified in internal medicine, geriatric medicine, pediatrics, adolescent, or family medicine. As may be required under applicable state law and in limited circumstances, other clinicians, such as duly licensed nurse practitioners and physician assistants/associates, may be considered for affiliation as a PCP. In these situations, Harvard Pilgrim requires that the full scope of services described below be available to Harvard Pilgrim members through explicitly defined arrangements with Harvard Pilgrim–affiliated providers.

Scope of Services

A primary care provider (PCP):

- Acts as the primary treating clinician for general medical problems not requiring a specialist. The PCP is the clinician of first contact for undiagnosed problems and coordinates inpatient and outpatient care when other specialists are involved in his/her patient's ongoing care.
- Provides age-appropriate preventive screening and intervention and ongoing treatment of chronic health issues.
- Has clear, accessible coverage arrangements with affiliated (Harvard Pilgrim–credentialed) practitioners, which ensure that members in his/her panel have access to same-day appointments when needed.
- Provides 24-hour/7-day emergency coverage plans for general medical issues for his/her panel of patients
  - Coverage arrangement must provide access to a Harvard Pilgrim–affiliated clinician. Directing members to an emergency room does not meet this standard.

Harvard Pilgrim's Medical Director must approve any exception to the scope of services.

PCP Requirements

Harvard Pilgrim requires that a PCP:

- Meets Harvard Pilgrim credentialing standards and successfully completes initial credentialing and periodic recredentialing processes.
- Is published as a primary care provider (PCP) in Harvard Pilgrim's *Provider Directory*
  - This does not preclude a PCP from simultaneously having a subspecialty practice.
- Accepts members from the general Harvard Pilgrim membership into his/her panel, including auto-assignment (except when the practice is at capacity).
- Allows Harvard Pilgrim to use practitioner performance data (such as quality, cost, resource use, or utilization information) as is required by the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA).

Clinicians may not provide services to Harvard Pilgrim members until the Credentialing Committee approves them for affiliation. Any claim submitted prior to the effective date of the affiliation will be denied. A practitioner's effective date is the date of committee approval or later if requested by the provider.

Patient Age Threshold Policy

In order to provide the highest quality of care for children and adults, PCPs should possess training appropriate to the age groups they serve. A clinician with formal training in either internal medicine or family medicine should coordinate the care of adult members. The age by which all pediatric members should have transitioned from the care of a pediatrician to an internist is less clearly defined.

Harvard Pilgrim's age threshold policy is consistent with those followed by hospitals specializing in the care of pediatric patients and with the opinions of the American Academy of Pediatrics and Boards of Registration in Medicine within Harvard Pilgrim's service area.

Age Threshold Exceptions

A pediatrician or internist, in making his/her determination of the appropriateness of initiating or continuing care for patients older or younger than the recommended ages, should be prepared to demonstrate that he/she is able to provide the benefits of uninterrupted coordination of chronic care and manage the risk of conditions developing earlier or later in life that may ordinarily be more competently managed by a PCP with formal training in the care of children or adults.

Concierge-Style Practice

If any PCP intends to offer certain amenities or special services not considered covered services in exchange for payment of any additional fee or charges by the member, he or she must notify Harvard Pilgrim in writing at least 90 days before charging such fee to any Harvard Pilgrim member.

The PCP must also give the following information in writing to all Harvard Pilgrim members receiving care from such clinician:

- The PCP's intent to charge the fee
- The amount of the fee
- A description of all relevant conditions and benefits associated with such fee

Continuity of care coverage and payment terms apply for any eligible Harvard Pilgrim member unable to pay the access fee.

PUBLICATION HISTORY

06/15/12	reviewed; no changes
11/15/12	added physician assistants to definition section
06/15/13	added NCQA practitioner performance data requirement information
09/15/16	reviewed, no changes
03/01/18	reviewed; no changes
09/01/21	reviewed; no changes
01/01/23	reviewed; no changes
09/01/25	reviewed; in support of the ME and NH regulation, updated physician assistant to also reference physician associate
05/01/26	updated to align with Point32Health credentialing process
07/01/26	reviewed; no changes