

# Overview

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## Summary

Referral, notification and authorization procedures are components of Harvard Pilgrim's utilization management program. Harvard Pilgrim works in partnership with PCPs and other providers to coordinate care and ensure that medical services are medically necessary and a covered benefit.

## Definitions

### Referral

A clinical determination made by a PCP, based on an assessment of his/her patient, regarding the patient's need for the services of a specialist.

### Notification

The requirement that a servicing provider (usually the in-network facility/hospital) inform Harvard Pilgrim of planned elective services, or in the case of an emergency, of services that have already been rendered. The purpose of notification is to provide Harvard Pilgrim the opportunity to:

- Verify eligibility
- Determine benefit coverage
- Initiate care management, when applicable

Notification does not guarantee payment by Harvard Pilgrim Health Care. Services must be covered under eligible members' benefit plans. In addition, Harvard Pilgrim requires clinical review for the purpose of determining medical necessity for certain services, drugs, devices, and equipment in order to be covered.

### Authorization

The prospective, concurrent and/or retrospective review process used to determine Harvard Pilgrim's reimbursement for a particular medical service. Authorization involves determination of:

- Eligibility
- Level of benefits at the time of the request
- Medical necessity

Authorization also supports care management by creating the opportunity to:

- Direct care to the appropriate setting and/or provider
- Share risk with the provider
- Trigger care management
- Generate data that can be used for continuous improvement of Harvard Pilgrim's business processes

### Referring Provider

The physician initiating the referral.

### Servicing Provider

The entity providing the service. For referral purposes, the servicing provider is the specialist. For notification and authorization purposes, the servicing provider usually means the facility and the admitting/attending physician but may be a provider such as a physical therapist.

## Responsibilities

Harvard Pilgrim requires that physicians and providers caring for the same member share relevant information regarding the member's diagnosis and treatment as needed to ensure effective coordination of care.

**PCPs** (i.e., referring providers) are responsible for:

- Coordinating medically necessary specialty care and clinical services, including behavioral health services, for members under their care by making a referral to the appropriate specialist, and
  - Communicating a specific plan to the member before he/she leaves the office.
  - Ensuring that the member understands the specialty treatment follow-up process.
  - Informing the member whom to call with questions.
- Managing the specialty care by establishing expectations regarding exchange of clinical information between the PCP and the specialist.

**Facilities** (i.e., servicing providers) are responsible for:

- Notifying Harvard Pilgrim of inpatient admissions within appropriate time frames.
- Obtaining authorization, when applicable, for specific elective services and procedures.

**Harvard Pilgrim** is responsible for:

- Determining member eligibility and benefit coverage.
- Determining hospital and provider eligibility.
- Evaluating medical necessity of proposed treatment for specific elective services and procedures.
- Evaluating the appropriateness of the clinical setting for admission to skilled nursing facilities and acute rehabilitation facilities.
- Notifying the member and servicing provider of all medical necessity approval or denial decisions in writing for the services and procedures reviewed.
- Providing notification confirmation and authorization numbers, if applicable, for claims payment processing.

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### PUBLICATION HISTORY

01/01/12	removed First Seniority Freedom information from header
02/19/16	reviewed; administrative edits for clarification
03/01/21	reviewed; administrative edits for clarification
01/01/23	reviewed; no changes
08/15/24	updated web address for UnitedHealthcare and removed phone number