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## ABOUT AHCA

### THE FLORIDA AGENCY FOR HEALTH CARE ADMINISTRATION

The Florida Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA or Agency) was statutorily created by Chapter 20, Florida Statutes. The Agency champions accessible, affordable, quality health care for all Floridians. It is the state's chief health policy and planning entity. AHCA is the single state agency responsible for administering Florida's Medicaid program which currently serves over 2.8 million Floridians. As such it develops and carries out policies related to the Medicaid program. The Medicaid program is administered by the Agency's Division of Medicaid Services.

### AHCA's MISSION

AHCA's mission is Better Health Care for All Floridians.

## ABOUT eQHEALTH SOLUTIONS

### COMPANY INFORMATION, MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

eQHealth Solutions is a non-profit, multi-state health care quality improvement, medical cost management and health information technology company providing a wide range of effective and efficient solutions for our clients. Services include care coordination, utilization review, quality improvement, wellness services and quality review for home and community based waiver services. eQHealth Solutions is a leader in assisting providers to embrace health information technology (HIT) to improve the quality of care provided to patients / recipients.

### Corporate Mission

*"Improve the quality and value of health care by using information and collaborative relationships to enable change"*

### Corporate Vision

*"To be an effective leader in improving the quality and value of health care in diverse and global markets"*

### Corporate Values

- ▶ *Pursuit of innovation;*
- ▶ *Integrity in the work we do;*
- ▶ *Sharing the responsibility for achieving corporate goals;*
- ▶ *Treating people with respect;*
- ▶ *Delivering products and services that are valuable to customer;*
- ▶ *Fostering an environment of professional growth and fulfillment;*
- ▶ *Engaging in work that is socially relevant; and*
- ▶ *Continuous quality improvement.*

## **eQHEALTH SOLUTIONS LOCATIONS AND CLIENTS**

### **Florida**

eQHealth Solutions was awarded the contract in 2011 by Florida's Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA or Agency) to serve as its Medicaid Quality Improvement Organization (QIO). On behalf of the Agency, our Florida location provides diverse medical cost and quality management services in a variety of inpatient and non-inpatient settings. Our main office is located in the Tampa Bay area.

### **Louisiana**

Under a federal contract with the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) since 1986-2014, our office in Louisiana serves as the state's Medicare QIO. As the Louisiana QIO, eQHealth Solutions assisted providers in achieving significant improvements quality of care in areas such as heart attack and pneumonia care, nursing home quality, home care delivery, prevention and wellness and adoption of electronic health records. Starting in 2014 as a QIO-Like entity, we provide quality improvement field – based work as a subcontractor to a regional Medicare QIN-QIO.

In 2009, we began our Senior Medicare Patrol grant with the federal Administration for Community Living (formerly AoA) to develop and implement anti-fraud efforts in Louisiana with additional awards covering the states of Florida and Mississippi. This work is supported through our QIO infrastructure.

### **Mississippi**

Under contract with the State of Mississippi's Division of Medicaid (DOM) since 1997, eQHealth Solutions serves as the utilization management and QIO to provide health care quality and utilization management services in a variety of inpatient and non-inpatient settings. We also perform All Patient Refined-Diagnosis Related Group validation review.

### **Illinois**

Under contract with the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS), since 2002, eQHealth Solutions serves as the Medicaid QIO, providing acute inpatient quality of care and utilization management, DRG and APR-DRG validation review.

### **Colorado**

Under Contract with The Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF), eQHealth Solutions provides services for the ColoradoPAR (prior authorization request) program, effective September 1, 2015. Together, eQHealth and HCPF will serve Medicaid members by focusing on and implementing HCPF's mission to improve health care access and outcomes for the people we serve while demonstrating sound stewardship of financial resources.

## **Vermont**

Since June 2015, eQHealth has been contracted with the State of Vermont, Department of Health Access, as the utilization management and the care coordination software development vendor for a CMS advance planning document grant.

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## ACCESSIBILITY AND CONTACT INFORMATION

This section provides information about accessing the Comprehensive Medicaid Utilization Management Program (CMUMP) and provides important contact information. At the end of this section we provide a quick reference guide of web site links and toll free telephone and facsimile (fax) numbers.

### SUBMITTING PRIOR AUTHORIZATION (REVIEW) REQUESTS

#### Methods of Submission

All prior authorization (PA) review requests are submitted to eQHealth Solutions (eQHealth) through our proprietary, HIPAA-compliant web-based system, eQSuite, at <http://fl.eqhs.org>.

The only exception is for physicians who do not have access to eQSuite and who are submitting PA requests for scheduled elective inpatient procedures. Physicians without access to eQSuite may submit review requests by fax to 855-440-3747. The applicable forms, available on our website <http://fl.eqhs.org>, must be used.

Both methods of request submission are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

#### WHEN YOU NEED INFORMATION OR ASSISTANCE

AHCA and eQHealth are committed to delivering exceptional service to our customers. We offer a variety of ways for you to efficiently obtain the information or assistance you need. In the following sections we identify, by topic or type of assistance needed, useful resources.

For questions or information about the Comprehensive Medicaid Utilization Management Program, the following resources are available:

- ▶ Resources available on our Website: <http://fl.eqhs.org>
  - ◆ This Provider Manual: Inpatient Medical Services Provider Manual
  - ◆ Training presentations: Copies of training and education presentations are available under the “Training/Education” tab.
- ▶ eQHealth Solutions customer service staff: Toll free number 855-444-3747.

#### Questions about Submitting PA Requests or about Using eQSuite

- ▶ *eQSuite User Guide for eQReview for Inpatient Medical Services* available on our website: <http://fl.eqhs.org>

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## Checking the Status of a PA Request or Submitting an Inquiry about a Request

- ▶ Check the status of a previously submitted PA request: Use your secure eQSuite login and check the information in your review status report.
- ▶ Submit an inquiry using eQSuite's helpline module. You may use it when you have a question about a previously submitted PA request.

Both options are available 24 hours a day. Although using eQSuite is the most efficient way to obtain information about PA requests, you also may contact our customer service unit.

### eQHealth Solutions Customer Service

For general inquiries, inquiries that cannot be addressed through eQSuite, or if you have a complaint, contact our customer service staff.

The toll free customer service number is: 855-444-3747 (855-444-eqhs). Staff is available 8:00AM – 5:00PM Eastern Time, Monday through Friday, excluding the following State-observed holidays:

- ▶ New Year's Day
- ▶ Memorial Day
- ▶ Labor Day
- ▶ Thanksgiving Day
- ▶ Martin Luther King Day
- ▶ Independence Day
- ▶ Veterans Day
- ▶ Christmas Day

If you call during non-business hours, you will have the option of leaving a message. Calls received after business hours are answered by our customer staff the following business day.

If you have a complaint and would prefer to submit it in writing, send it to:

eQHealth Solutions, Inc.  
Florida Division  
Attention: Customer Service Department  
5802 Benjamin Center Dr.  
Suite #105  
Tampa, FL 33634

## SUBMITTING SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

It sometimes will be necessary to submit supporting information for authorization requests. We provide two methods for submitting supporting documentation. You may:

- ▶ Upload and directly link the information to the eQSuite review record, or
- ▶ Download eQHealth's fax cover sheet(s) and fax the information to our toll free fax number: 855-427-3747.

## Requesting a Reconsideration of a Medical Necessity Denial

When eQHealth renders an adverse medical necessity determination for all or some of the requested services, the attending or treating physician, the hospital or the recipient may request reconsideration. Requests for reconsideration may be submitted:

Through eQSuite, or

- ▶ By:
  - ◆ Phone: toll free number 855-977-3747
  - ◆ Fax: toll free number 855-677-3747
  - ◆ U.S. mail, sent to:

A reconsideration request form is posted on <http://fl.eqhs.org>, Inpatient tab, Forms and Downloads folder.

eQHealth Solutions, Inc  
Florida Division  
5802 Benjamin Center Dr.  
Suite 105  
Tampa, FL 33634

## QUICK REFERENCE: CONTACT INFORMATION

- ▶ eQHealth Solutions (eQHealth)
  - ◆ Submit a prior authorization request
    - Web site (24x7): <http://fl.eqhs.org>
    - By fax (only for physicians without eQSuite access): toll free 855-440-3747
  - ◆ Submit additional information (24x7):
    - Upload and directly link the information to the eQSuite record, or
    - Download the eQHealth cover sheet and fax the information to our toll free number 855-427-3747
  - ◆ Submit a reconsideration review request by:
    - Web: <http://fl.eqhs.org>

- 
- Phone: 855-977-3747
  - Fax: 855-677-3747
  - U.S. mail, sent to:  
eQHealth Solutions, Inc  
Florida Division  
  
Attention: Customer Service Department  
5802 Benjamin Center Dr.  
Suite 105  
Tampa, FL 33634
  - ◆ Obtain information about a previously submitted prior authorization request:  
eQSuite's provider review status reports or helpline module: available 24x7
  - ◆ Customer service: 855-444-3747
    - Speak with a customer service representative 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM Eastern Time, Monday through Friday except State-approved holidays.
    - Leave a message 24x7.
    - U.S. mail, sent to:  
eQHealth Solutions, Inc  
Florida Division  
  
Attention: Customer Service Department  
5802 Benjamin Center Dr.  
Suite 105  
Tampa, FL 33634

## PRIOR AUTHORIZATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

This section provides summary information about the following administrative and review practices and prior authorization requirements.

- ▶ Submitting review requests and supporting documentation
- ▶ Review request submission timeframes
- ▶ Review completion timeframes
- ▶ Fair Hearings

### SUBMITTING REVIEW REQUESTS AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

#### Submitting Review Requests

All prior authorization (PA) review requests are submitted through eQHealth's proprietary data system, eQSuite. <http://fl.eqhs.org>. The only exception is for physicians who do not have access to eQSuite and who are submitting PA requests for scheduled elective inpatient procedures.

#### Submitting Supporting Documentation

It sometimes will be necessary to submit supporting documentation with the authorization requests. For example, a physician may be asked to submit historical clinical information to support the medical necessity of a scheduled elective procedure.

### REQUEST SUBMISSION TIMEFRAMES

Review requests must be submitted within particular timeframes. The timeframe depends on the type of hospitalization and/or on the type of review request. Following are the required review request submission timeframes:

- ▶ Elective procedure prior authorization: At least three days before admission
- ▶ Urgent, emergent and trauma admissions (including one day stays): Within 24 hours of the admission (recommended)
- ▶ Continued stay review: Prior to the end of the current approval period (applicable only for admissions prior to 7/1/13, BBA and Undocumented Non Citizen reviews)
- ▶ Retrospective prepayment review: Within 12 months of the date of discharge or date of eligibility determination. This includes total length of stay including all documentation at the time of request. **Once requested there will be no modification to days already authorized.**
- ▶ Retrospective post-payment review: Upon request of the record or within the timeframe specified by eQHealth
- ▶ Expedited reconsideration review
  - ◆ For a hospitalized patient: Before the patient is discharged
  - ◆ For scheduled elective surgeries: Within 30 calendar days of the adverse determination

- ▶ Standard reconsideration review: Within 30 calendar days of the adverse determination

## REVIEW COMPLETION TIMEFRAMES

The timeframe for completing a review request depends on the type of review. The completion timeframe also may depend on whether the request must be reviewed by a physician reviewer (PR). The completion time is measured from the date we receive all required information.

- ▶ Prior authorization review (scheduled elective inpatient procedure and acute admission reviews)
  - ◆ Nurse reviewer determination: Within four hours of receipt of the request
  - ◆ When referred to a PR: Within one business day of the referral
- ▶ Balanced Budget Act (emergency hospitalization) reviews including reviews for undocumented non-citizens
  - ◆ Nurse reviewer determination: Within one business day of receipt of the request
  - ◆ When referred to a PR: Within two business days of the referral
- ▶ Retrospective review: Within 20 business days, regardless of whether or not a review by a PR is required
- ▶ Expedited reconsideration: One business day of receipt of the request
- ▶ Standard reconsideration: 20 calendar days

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## TYPES OF REVIEW AND APPLICABILITY

In this section we summarize the various types of review and note the recipient groups or situations for which they are applicable.

### REVIEW TYPES

- ▶ Scheduled elective procedure review
  - ◆ Performed before admission
  - ◆ Required for:
    - Recipients age 21 and older for whom an elective procedure and admission are scheduled
    - Children (under age 21) for whom an elective C-section, inpatient bariatric surgery or hysterectomy is planned
- ▶ Admission review
  - ◆ Conducted within 24 hours of admission
  - ◆ Includes emergency or trauma admissions, urgent admissions and facility-to-facility transfers
- ▶ Continued stay review (also referred to as concurrent review)
  - ◆ Applicable only to admissions prior to 7/1/13, BBA and undocumented non-citizen reviews: Performed when there has been an admission review approval and hospitalization, beyond the admission review approval end date. The active approval (certification or authorization) end date is the trigger for continued stay review. Review must be requested before the expiration of the current authorization period
  - ◆ Hospitalization for emergency services (BBA and undocumented non-citizens) can be authorized only for the duration of the emergency.
    - Medicaid will not pay for continuous or episodic services after the emergency has been alleviated.
    - ◆ Performed:
      - Concurrently (while services are in progress) or retrospectively (after discharge)
      - To verify the reason for the admission and/or continued stay meets the definition of an emergency condition and, if so, the date the emergency situation was alleviated.
- ▶ Retrospective prepayment review (or, simply, retrospective review)
  - ◆ As approved by the Agency, when the hospital did not adhere to the timeframe for submitting PA requests, failing to obtain admission review while the patient was

- hospitalized (The frequency of non-compliance with request submission timeframes is monitored by eQHealth Solutions.)
- ◆ Performed when:
    - Medicaid eligibility could not be confirmed until after the patient's discharge
    - Recipient has been discharged from an inpatient stay
  - ◆ Providers must submit request **only once per recipient inpatient stay.**
  - ▶ Retrospective post-payment review
    - ◆ Performed:
      - Annually for a selected number of inpatient medical records
      - To determine whether the information presented by the provider during admission and continued stay review is verifiable from information in the medical record
    - ◆ Providers submit requested records through eQSuite
  - ▶ Reconsideration review
    - ◆ **Expedited:** May be requested and will be performed when eQHealth renders an adverse medical necessity determination and:
      - The recipient is still hospitalized at the time of the request, or
      - For elective surgical procedure PA requests, before the recipient is admitted.
    - ◆ **Standard:** May be requested and will be performed when eQHealth renders an adverse medical necessity determination and the patient has been discharged when the request is received.

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## SUBMITTING PRIOR AUTHORIZATION REQUESTS AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

### SUBMITTING PRIOR AUTHORIZATION REQUESTS

Hospitals submit all authorization requests using our proprietary web-based prior authorization system, eQSuite. Physicians who have access to eQSuite also use eQSuite to submit prior authorization requests for scheduled elective admissions for surgical procedures.

Physicians without access to eQSuite submit elective procedure PA requests by fax. eQHealth's procedure-specific fax forms must be used. They are available on our website <http://fl.eqhs.org>. Our toll-free fax number is 1-855-440-3747.

### eQSuite

#### *Key System Features*

Among eQSuite's many features are:

- ▶ Secure HIPAA-compliant technology allowing providers to electronically record and transmit most information necessary for a review to be completed.
- ▶ Secure transmission protocols including the encryption of all data transferred.
- ▶ System access control for changing or adding authorized users.
- ▶ 24x7 access with easy to follow data entry screens.
- ▶ Rules-driven functionality and system edits which assist providers by immediately alerting them to such things as situations for which review is not required.
- ▶ A reporting module that provides the real time status of all review requests.
- ▶ A helpline module through which providers may submit questions about a particular PA request.

#### **Minimal Computer System Requirements**

- ▶ Any of the two most recent versions of:
- ▶ Internet Explorer, Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, Safari using a Broadband internet connection.
- ▶ [Minimum System Requirements](#)

Each provider designates a user or system administrator. eQHealth assigns a user ID and password for him or her. The administrator, who need not have any information systems technical background, will have access rights to create, terminate and maintain user IDs and passwords for each user in your facility or, as applicable, physician office. Managing system access is a user-friendly, non-technical process.

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## SUBMITTING SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Sometimes it will be necessary to provide supporting documentation with authorization requests. We offer two methods of submitting the documentation: You may:

- ▶ Upload and directly link the information to the eQSuite review record, or
- ▶ Download from our Website, <http://fl.eqhs.org>, the appropriate eQHealth fax cover sheet(s). You then complete the information and fax it toll-free to 1-855-440-3747.

If you choose to fax the information you must use eQHealth's special fax cover sheets. Each cover sheet includes a bar code that is specific to the particular recipient and for the type of required information. The bar code enables automatically linking of the information to the correct recipient review record. Use of the bar coded cover sheet:

- ▶ Assures the image is linked to the correct review record.
- ▶ Provides an effective audit trail for ensuring that all required documentation submitted is complete and timely.

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## FIRST AND SECOND LEVELS OF REVIEW

eQHealth Solutions provides two levels of review. They are distinguished by their:

- ▶ Clinical credentials.
- ▶ Determinations they may render and how they render those determinations.

With the exception of reconsideration reviews, all inpatient medical and surgical service review requests not approved through our clinical rules-based system algorithms are processed by 1<sup>st</sup> level reviewers (clinical or nurse reviewers). All reconsideration requests are addressed by physician reviewers.

### FIRST LEVEL REVIEW

#### First Level Reviewer Credentials

Our 1<sup>st</sup> level reviewers are Florida licensed registered nurses who have at least two years inpatient hospital experience.

#### First Level Review Determinations

First level reviewers may render one of the following review determinations:

- ▶ Approval: To render this determination the nurse reviewers apply Agency-approved criteria, guidelines and policy. If satisfied the nurse approves the acute inpatient level of care (LOC).
- ▶ Pend the request for additional or clarifying information.
- ▶ Referral to a second level (physician) peer reviewer. This determination is rendered when:
  - ◆ The clinical reviewer's medical necessity criteria are not satisfied; or
  - ◆ A prior authorization request is for a surgical procedure that may be experimental or investigational.
- ▶ Technical denial: This non-clinical determination is rendered when there is non-compliance or inconsistency with a coverage requirement or with an Agency administrative policy.

Clinical reviewers may not render an adverse determination. When the 1<sup>st</sup> level reviewer is not able to approve the services on the basis of complete information, they must refer the request to a second level, physician peer reviewer.

#### First Level Review Clinical Decision Support Tools

An inpatient medical/surgical authorization request is approved through satisfaction of clinical decision support tools applied by a nurse reviewer.

### ***Nurse Reviewer Decision Support Tools***

- ▶ When performing review, 1<sup>st</sup> level reviewers apply Agency-approved clinical criteria, guidelines and policies to substantiate the medical necessity of the LOC. The applicable decision support tools depend on the type of review being performed.
- ▶ Agency's proprietary criteria for prior authorization of a particular surgical procedure.
- ▶ Emergency admission reviews for BBA: eQHealth's proprietary emergency clinical indicators.
- ▶ Emergency admission reviews for Undocumented Non-Citizens: eQHealth's proprietary emergency clinical indicators.

## **SECOND LEVEL REVIEW**

### **Second Level Reviewer Credentials**

Second level (physician peer) reviewers are Florida-licensed physicians of medicine, osteopathy or dentistry who are located in Florida and in active practice.

- ▶ Are board certified in the specialty for the service they are asked to review.
- ▶ Are on staff at or have active admitting privileges in at least one Florida hospital.
- ▶ May not review any case for which a known or potential conflict of interest exists.

### **Physician Reviewer Role**

Physician peer reviewers review all:

- ▶ Authorization requests that cannot be approved by a 1<sup>st</sup> level reviewer.
- ▶ Requests for reconsideration of an adverse determination.

The review is performed by a physician peer reviewer who is of the same or similar specialty as the ordering physician.

### **Second Level Review Determinations**

For general reviews, a physician reviewer may render one of the following determinations:

- ▶ Approval of the acute inpatient LOC as requested.
- ▶ Pend the request for additional or clarifying information from the ordering physician.
- ▶ Denial: The service is found not to be medically necessary or the emergency event has been alleviated.
- ▶ Partial denial: This determination is a finding that a portion of the planned services and/or LOS is not medically necessary or the emergency event has been alleviated (BBA and undocumented non-citizen reviews only). The result is a reduction in approved services.

When a request for a reconsideration of an adverse determination is submitted, the reviewing physician renders one of the following determinations:

- ▶ Uphold the original adverse determination.
- ▶ Modify the original determination, approving a portion of the services (BBA and undocumented non-citizen reviews only).
- ▶ Reverse the original determination, approving all services.

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## INPATIENT MEDICAL & SURGICAL SERVICES AUTHORIZATION PROCESS

In this section we explain the authorization (review) process for acute inpatient medical, surgical and rehabilitative services. The general review process is essentially the same for all types of inpatient services and, with the exception of reconsideration requests, for all types of authorization requests. However the type authorization request may influence administrative requirements such as the review submission timeframe.

In the following sections we explain the review process for:

- ▶ Elective procedure prior authorization requests.
- ▶ Admission review requests.
- ▶ Continued stay (concurrent) review requests.
- ▶ Reconsideration review requests.

The review process for surgical procedure prior authorization and admission review requests is essentially the same. Therefore these types of review are discussed under a single heading. Since there are some important process differences for reconsideration reviews, that review type is discussed in a separate section.

### **Procedure Prior Authorization, Admission &, Continued Stay Reviews**

#### **Automated Administrative Screening**

When the review request is entered in eQSuite the system applies a series of edits to ensure review is required and all eligibility, coverage and administrative requirements are satisfied. If there is review exclusion or a failed administrative rule or policy, the review request is cancelled. The system prohibits further review processing and the requesting provider is notified.

- ▶ A requesting hospital or a physician using eQSuite receives an email advisory message to check the review status report in eQSuite.
- ▶ If a physician submitted a surgical procedure prior authorization request by fax, the physician is notified by mail.

#### **System-based Clinical Criteria First Level Review**

eQSuite includes system-based medical necessity criteria for certain diagnoses and clinical conditions. The request is routed automatically for review by a nurse.

#### **Nurse Review Process**

##### ***Administrative Screening of the Request***

The nurse (first level or clinical) reviewer first evaluates the request for compliance with administrative requirements that cannot be identified by eQSuite. If there is a review exclusion or administrative policy breach the nurse issues a technical denial, cancelling the review request. The requesting provider is notified.

## **Screening for Request Completeness and Pended and Suspended Review Requests**

When the request is not cancelled the nurse reviewer screens the submitted clinical information to ensure it is complete, current, legible and compliant. If information is illegible, inadequate or ambiguous the nurse pends the review request.

- ▶ **Pended review requests:** When additional or clarifying clinical information is required, the first level reviewer renders a pend determination. The requesting provider is notified.
  - ◆ The requested information must be submitted within one business day or the review is suspended.
- ▶ **Suspended review requests:** If the requested information is not submitted within one business day, the review request is suspended.
  - ◆ Suspending a review closes the eQSuite record.
  - ◆ Hospitals and physicians using eQSuite are notified electronically as described under “First Level Medical Necessity Review: *Approvals*.”

For physicians who submitted a request by fax, the pend notification previously issued includes a statement that the request will be suspended if the information is not received within one business day. Therefore a follow-up notification is not mailed.

- ◆ If the information is provided after a request was suspended we will reopen the record.

## **First Level Medical Necessity Review**

After all required information is provided the nurse proceeds with the medical necessity review or, for BBA and undocumented non-citizens reviews, determine the nature of the emergency. The first level reviewer evaluates all clinical information entered in eQSuite and any supporting documentation attached to the eQSuite record.

### **Approvals**

First level reviewers apply criteria, guidelines and Agency policy to determine whether services are medically necessary or are otherwise allowable. When all applicable criteria and policies are satisfied the nurse approves the services as proposed and approval notifications are generated.

- ▶ Electronic notifications are generated to providers who submit requests through eQSuite. When the determination is rendered, eQSuite immediately generates an email notification to the provider who requested the review. The email advises the provider to log in to eQSuite and check the secure web-based provider review status report. The provider then may access the report to see the determination.
  - If a physician submitted a surgical procedure prior authorization request by fax, the approval notification is mailed to the physician.

- ▶ Within one business day of the determination we electronically post a written determination notification. Providers may access the notification by using their eQSuite secure log on. The notifications can be downloaded and printed.
- ▶ The approval information is transmitted to the Medicaid fiscal agent.
  - ◆ The fiscal agent transmits the prior authorization (PA) number to eQHealth.
  - ◆ Within 24 hours of our receipt of the PA number, we update the provider's review status report to include the PA number.
    - If a physician submitted a surgical procedure prior authorization request by fax, the PA number is mailed to the physician.

If it is an admission prior to 7/1/13, a BBA or an Undocumented Non-Citizen review request, the approval information includes the last date certified. This date serves as the hospital's trigger to submit a continued stay review request if the patient will not be discharged on or before the date following the last day certified.

### **Referral to a Physician Reviewer**

First level reviewers may not render an adverse determination. They refer to a physician peer reviewer any authorization request they cannot approve. When the first level reviewer refers a review request to a physician reviewer the requesting provider receives notification of the referral.

## **Second Level (Physician Peer) Review Process**

### ***Process Overview***

When we schedule physician reviews every effort is made to match the care being reviewed to a physician of the same specialty. The physician peer reviewer (PR) uses his/her clinical experience and judgment and considers all of the following factors:

- ▶ As applicable for the patient and for the services under review, whether the services for which authorization is requested are eligible for reimbursement.
- ▶ Whether the services for which authorization is requested conform to the Agency's definition of medical necessity.
- ▶ As applicable for the patient and for the services under review, consistency with other applicable Agency definitions
- ▶ The patient's:
  - ◆ Current clinical condition, diagnosis and prognosis.
  - ◆ Proposed treatment plan and whether it is adequate and appropriately to meet the patient's unique needs.
  - ◆ Progress toward meeting treatment plan goals and whether the maximum medical benefit has been achieved.
- ▶ Given the patient's clinical status, whether there is an available and appropriate less intensive, less restrictive or more conservative care option.

- ▶ Generally accepted professional standards of care.

The PR may approve (authorize) the admission on the basis of the information provided. Or the PR may determine additional information is needed and pend a review request while attempting to obtain the information from the attending or ordering physician.

- ▶ **Approval on the basis of available information:** When the available information substantiates the emergency or the medical necessity of the LOC and, when applicable, the proposed LOS, the PR approves the services as requested and the review is completed. Notifications are issued
- ▶ **When additional information is required:** If the PR is not able to approve the services on the basis of the available information, they will attempt to speak with the attending or ordering physician to obtain additional or clarifying information. PRs do not render adverse determinations without first attempting to speak with the physician.
- ▶ **PR pended review requests:** If the ordering physician is not available when our physician calls, the PR may issue a pend determination at that time. The particular information required is documented in the review record.
  - ◆ The requesting hospital receives an electronic notification of the pended review. Physicians who submitted a surgical procedure prior authorization request by fax receive a mailed notification. The notification includes the information required and advises the physician that the information must be provided within one business day.
  - ◆ If the requested information is not received within one business day, the PR renders a determination on the basis of the information that is available.

### **Adverse Determinations**

Only a PR may render an adverse determination. As noted in the preceding section, prior to rendering an adverse determination, our PR will attempt to have a peer-to-peer discussion with the attending or ordering physician. If our PR was unable to make any contact with the attending physician a decision will be made based on available information.

There are two types of adverse determinations: denial and partial denial.

- ▶ When a denial is rendered, none of the requested services are approved. This type of denial may also be referred to as a full denial.
- ▶ When a partial denial is rendered, for an admission prior to 7/1/13, or a BBA or an Undocumented Non-Citizen review request, a portion of the hospitalization is approved but some days are denied. Therefore there is a reduction in the services for which authorization was requested.

### **Adverse Determination Notifications**

Adverse determination notifications are issued to the physician, the hospital that requested the review and to the recipient or legal representative.

- ▶ Electronic and written notifications are generated to providers who submit requests through eQSuite.

- ▶ Hardcopy notifications are issued to recipients and to physicians who do not use eQSuite. These notifications are sent within one business day of the determination.
  - ◆ Written notifications are mailed to recipients.
  - ◆ Mailed notifications are sent to physicians who submit PA requests by fax.

For partial denials of an admission prior to 7/1/13, a BBA or an Undocumented Non-Citizen inpatient stay the approval information is transmitted to the fiscal agent. The provider's eQSuite status report is updated with the PA number.

The written notification includes information about the providers' and the recipient's right to a reconsideration of the adverse determination. The recipient's notification also includes information about the right to request a fair hearing.

## RECONSIDERATION REVIEWS

### General Information

There are two types of reconsiderations, expedited and standard.

Any party may request a reconsideration of an adverse determination. The only exceptions are:

- ▶ When the provider agrees with the adverse determination. In that case reconsideration rights are waived for all parties.
- ▶ Undocumented non-citizens do not have reconsideration rights. However they may request a fair hearing.

Reconsideration requests may be submitted through eQSuite, by fax, phone or mail. The requesting party must submit additional or clarifying information supporting the medical necessity of the services or the nature of the emergency (BBA & Undocumented Non-Citizens reviews).

### Administrative Screening of Reconsideration Requests

When a reconsideration request is received it is screened to ensure compliance with all administrative requirements. If a request does not conform to administrative requirements it is cancelled. Providers receive notification that the request is cancelled.

### Reconsideration Review Process

Reconsideration requests bypass first level reviewers. These reviews are performed only by second level reviewers. The PR who performs the review may not have been involved in rendering the original determination. The PR evaluates the information that resulted in the adverse determination and evaluates all additional information submitted.

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## **Types of Determinations and Determination Implication**

When the reconsideration determination is a modification or a reversal of the original determination:

- ▶ For admissions prior to 7/1/13, BBA and undocumented non-citizen review requests the determination and notification includes the approved LOS (from and through dates shown in the notification).
- ▶ The approval information is sent to the fiscal agent and, as necessary, a new PA number is issued as described under “First Level Medical Necessity Review: *Approvals*”.

The reconsideration determination is final. When the determination is to modify or uphold the original adverse determination, no further reconsideration is available. However the recipient may request a fair hearing.

## **Fraud and Abuse Reporting**

eQHealth immediately notifies the Agency of any instance of potential fraud or abuse. The Agency provides direction in what, if any, alteration in the review process is required as a result of the reported incident.

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