Summit COMMUNITY CARE

Arkansas | Medicaid

Reimbursement Policy
Consultations

Policy Number: **G-05006**
Policy Section: **Evaluation and Management**
Last Approval Date: **12/02/2025**
Effective Date: **09/01/2026**

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Policy

The health plan allows reimbursement for face-to-face medical consultations by physicians or qualified nonphysician practitioners (referred to as “providers” throughout this policy) according to the guidelines below, unless provider, state, federal, or CMS contracts and/or requirements indicate otherwise.

Reimbursement is based on the fee schedule or contracted/negotiated rate structured on one of the following:

- The appropriate code designating a consultation based on state Medicaid guidelines
- The appropriate code designating a consultation based on CPT® guidelines

Consultations

Consultations are reimbursable according to the following guidelines:

- Only allows one consultation per patient, per consulting physician, per state fiscal year (July 1 to June 30)
- The consultation is requested in writing or verbally by the attending provider or appropriate source.
- The consultation is provided within the scope and practice of the consulting provider.
- The consultation includes a personal examination of the patient.
- The consulting provider completes a written report that includes:
  - Member history, including chief diagnosis and/or complaint.
  - Examination.
  - Physical finding(s).
  - Recommendations for future management and/or ordered service(s).
  - The attending provider’s request for the consultation.

- The reason for the consultation.
- Documentation that indicates the information communicated by the consulting provider to the member's attending provider and the member's authorized representative.
- The consulting provider's written report.

- The member's medical record must contain:
  - The attending provider's request for the consultation.
  - The reason for the consultation.
  - Documentation that indicates the information communicated by the consulting provider to the member's attending provider and the member's authorized representative.
  - The consulting provider's written report.
- Laboratory consultations must relate to test results that are outside the clinically significant normal or expected range, considering the member's condition.
- During a consultation, the consulting provider may initiate diagnostic and/or therapeutic services:
  - If the consulting provider performs a definitive therapeutic surgical procedure on the same day as the consultation for the same member, the consultation must be reported with modifier 25 or modifier 57, whichever is most appropriate:
    - If the appropriate modifier is not reported, the consultation is considered included in the reimbursement for the therapeutic surgical procedure; and therefore, not separately reimbursable.

Preoperative Clearance and Postoperative Evaluation

A surgeon may request that a provider perform a consultation as part of either a preoperative clearance or postoperative evaluation, as long as consultation guidelines are met in addition to the following:

- A consulting provider may be reimbursed for a postoperative evaluation only if:
  - The requesting surgeon requires a professional opinion for use in treating the member.
  - The consulting provider has not performed the preoperative clearance.
  - A consulting provider performs a preoperative clearance.
  - Subsequent management of all or a portion of the member's postoperative care is transferred to the same consulting provider who performed the preoperative clearance.
- Postoperative visits are considered concurrent care and do not qualify for reimbursement as consultations if:
  - A consulting provider performs a preoperative clearance.
  - Subsequent management of all or a portion of the member's postoperative care is transferred to the same consulting provider who performed the preoperative clearance.

Note: The following do not qualify as consultations:

- Routine screenings
- Routine preoperative or postoperative management care, including, but not limited to:
  - Member history and physical for the surgical procedure being performed
  - Services applicable to be billed with the surgical procedure code appended with modifier 56
  - Services applicable to be billed with the surgical procedure code appended with modifier 55

Consultation by a Primary Care Physician (PCP)

A PCP may perform a consultation for their own patient in the following circumstances:

- A surgeon has specifically requested the PCP to perform either a preoperative clearance or a postoperative evaluation, as long as:
  - Consultation, preoperative clearance, and/or postoperative evaluation guidelines are met.
  - Preoperative and/or postoperative consultations rendered by the member's PCP are reimbursable services based on state guidance or the provider's contract.
- The preoperative visit usually is included in the surgeon's global surgical allowance. Medical review may be required if the PCP is reimbursed for a service normally included in the global fee allowance.
- A behavioral health provider has specifically requested the PCP to perform a consultation to provide either a medical evaluation for a specific condition or a general medical evaluation (such as history and physical) on a member admitted to an inpatient psychiatric unit for behavioral health treatment. These occurrences are usually billed as evaluation and management (E/M) visits. Medical review may be required to ensure consultation guidelines are met.

Note: A PCP is responsible for the care of their own patient and, therefore, does not usually qualify to perform consultations because:

- Such services are considered *evaluations* rather than *consultations*.
- The PCP has an established medical record and/or history on the member.

Consultation within the Same Group Practice

A consultation may be considered for reimbursement if the attending provider requests a consultation from another provider of a different specialty or subspecialty within the same group practice, as long as consultation guidelines are met.

Nonreimbursable

The health plan does not allow reimbursement for the following regarding a consultation:

- Performed as a follow-up consultation
- Performed by telephone (Note: Telephone calls are not considered telemedicine.)
- Performed as a split or shared E/M visit

- Performed in addition to an E/M visit for the same member by the same provider, unless modifier 25 is appropriate
- Performed as a second or third opinion requested by the member or the member's authorized representative
- Performed for non-covered services
- When a transfer of care to the consulting provider occurs
- For both preoperative clearance and postoperative evaluation of the same member by the same consulting provider
- For which the specified guidelines are not met

Related Coding

Standard correct coding applies.

Definitions

- **Consultation:** The opinion or advice of a specialist requested by another physician or other appropriate source regarding evaluation and/or management of a specific problem.
- **Second Opinion:** An opinion obtained from an additional healthcare professional prior to the performance of a medical service or a surgical procedure. May relate to a formalized process, either voluntary or mandatory, which is used to help educate a patient regarding treatment alternatives and/or to determine medical necessity.
- **General Reimbursement Policy Definitions**

Related Policies and Materials

- Global Surgical Package
- Modifier Usage
- Modifiers 25 and 57: Evaluation and Management with Global Procedures
- Split Care Surgical Modifiers

References and Research Materials

This policy has been developed through consideration of the following:

- American Medical Association Current Procedural Terminology (CPT®) 2025
- CMS
- Optum EncoderPro 2025
- State contract
- State Medicaid

Policy History

- **12/02/2025 -** Review approved 12/02/2025 and effective 09/01/2026: updated policy to allow reimbursement for only 1 consultation per consulting physician, per state fiscal year (July 1 – June 30) and to no allow reimbursement for follow-up consultations

- 12/19/2023 - Review approved and effective: added definitions for Consultation and Second Opinion
- 09/14/2020 - Review approved
- 03/01/2019 - Initial approval and effective

Disclaimer

These reimbursement policies serve as a guide to assist you in accurate claims submissions and to outline the basis for reimbursement if the service is covered by a member's benefit plan. The determination that a service, procedure, or item is covered under a member's benefit plan is not a determination that you will be reimbursed. Services must also meet authorization and medical necessity guidelines appropriate to the procedure and diagnosis, as well as to the member's state of residence.

Ensure that you use proper billing and submission guidelines, including industry-standard, compliant codes on all claim submissions. Services should be billed with Current Procedural Terminology (CPT®) codes, Healthcare Common Procedure Coding System (HCPCS) codes, and/or revenue codes. These codes denote the services and/or procedures performed and, when billed, must be fully supported in the medical record and/or office notes. Unless otherwise noted within the policy, our reimbursement policies apply to both participating and non-participating professional providers and facilities.

If appropriate coding/billing guidelines or current reimbursement policies are not followed, we may:

- Reject or deny the claim.
- Recover and/or recoup claim payment.
- Adjust the reimbursement to reflect the appropriate services and/or procedures performed.

These reimbursement policies may be superseded by mandates in provider, state, federal, or Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) contracts and/or requirements. We strive to minimize delays in policy implementation. If there is a delay, we reserve the right to recoup and/or recover claims payment to the effective date, in accordance with the policy. We reserve the right to review and revise these policies when necessary. When there is an update, we will publish the most current policy to the website.

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