



Advantage Referrals

What is an Advantage Referral?

As a member of Western Health Advantage (WHA) you have the unique opportunity of receiving health care services from a specialty provider outside your own assigned medical group (group), as long as you receive those services from a participating provider within WHA's extended network. This feature of WHA's health plan is known as an *Advantage Referral*. The *Advantage Referral* program was developed by WHA to expand your choices of specialty physicians. It allows you to access any specialist in our network that agrees to participate in the *Advantage Referral* program, rather than limiting care from doctors who have a direct relationship with your primary care physician (PCP). For example, if your PCP is associated with UC Davis Medical Center and recommends that you see a specialist, upon your request you may obtain a referral to see a WHA specialist associated with Mercy Medical Group.

Please note that not all contracted providers participate in WHA's *Advantage Referral* program. Doctors that do not participate are identified in WHA's provider directories.

Additionally, WHA Care+ members may only access care from the following medical groups: Mercy Medical Group and Woodland Clinic Medical Group.

How does it work?

Your PCP will treat most of your health care needs, but if s/he decides your medical condition requires specialty care, you will be referred to another doctor with appropriate qualifications. When a specialist is needed, your PCP will typically refer you to a doctor s/he recommends within the same affiliated medical group. However, the referral can be made to an appropriate specialist that you select outside your group.

After your PCP submits an *Advantage Referral* to the Medical Management department of your group, the specialist will be notified of the number of visits and/or timeframe allowed to provide the services to you. Up to 3 visits are usually included in the initial *Advantage Referral* and the specialist can provide routine services, such as ordering lab work and plain-film x-rays without obtaining additional permission from your group. If special tests, procedures or surgery are recommended by the specialist, a separate referral is needed from your PCP and pre-approval is needed from your group's Medical Management department to ensure coverage.

What is a Standing Referral?

If you have a certain life-threatening, degenerative or disabling condition or disease requiring specialized medical care over a prolonged period of time, such as having a diagnosis of HIV or AIDS, you may be allowed a *Standing Referral* to a specialist. *Standing Referrals* allow more than the usual number of allowed visits that you may receive with a typical *Advantage Referral*, and it allows the specialist to

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provide more related services to you over a longer period of time without having to obtain additional permission from your medical group. *Standing Referrals* allow you to access services from a specialist or from a specialty care center that has demonstrated expertise in treating a medical condition or disease involving a complicated treatment regimen that requires ongoing monitoring. Specialists in WHA's provider network with specific expertise in treating HIV or AIDS are noted in the Provider Directory with a special symbol next to their names.

How can I check to see if a provider is still in the WHA Network?

Network providers may change, so please refer to the most current version of WHA's provider directories on WHA's website at: www.westernhealth.com for a current listing of participating providers, or call a member service representative.

Where can I get more information?

TDD/TTY service is available for the hearing or speech-impaired, Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm in either English or Spanish, by calling: (888) 877-5378, or you can dial 711. Should you have need for a translator face-to-face or over the phone, contact the **WHA Member Services Department**, Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, (888) 563-2250 toll free.

IMPORTANTE: ¿Puede leer este documento? Si no, nosotros le podemos ayudar a leerlo. Además, usted puede recibir el documento escrito en español. Para obtener ayuda gratuita, llame ahora mismo a Western Health Advantage al (888) 563-2250, de lunes a viernes de 8am a 5pm.

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