

Physician-Supervised Weight Loss Program Procedure

Goal

To identify BCN members who may meet the criteria for a bariatric surgery referral. This procedure will describe the documentation that is required by BCN in order to proceed with the medical determination about whether the initial referral will be approved.

Medical Criteria

1. **Age range:** 18 to 65 years of age. Requests for bariatric surgery for patients under 18 years of age should include documentation that the primary care physician has addressed the risk of surgery on future growth, and on the patient's maturity level, ability to understand the procedure and comply with postoperative instructions, and adequacy of family support. Patients over 65 years of age may be considered if it is documented in the medical record that the patient's physiologic age and comorbid conditions result in a positive risk/benefit ratio.
2. **BMI** greater than 40 or a BMI greater than 35 with comorbid conditions (such as degenerative joint disease, hypertension, hyperlipidemia, coronary artery disease, presence of atherosclerotic diseases, type 2 diabetes mellitus, sleep apnea and/or congestive heart failure).
3. **Clinical evaluation by M.D./D.O.:** Physician has documented failure of nonsurgical management, including structured, professionally supervised (physician or nonphysician) weight loss program for a minimum of six consecutive months within the last four years prior to the recommendation for bariatric surgery.

NOTE: This six month criterion is waived for individuals with a BMI greater than or equal to 50.

Medical record must demonstrate assessment and a therapeutic plan for each of the following elements and include any reports from a treating medical specialist including a dietitian or physical therapist. There is a minimum of three physician office visits required in the first 90 days (more frequently, as clinical circumstances dictate) and one visit in the subsequent three months, at which all of these elements must be documented. More frequent documentation should occur if clinical circumstances dictate. Documented communication is required if there is unsuccessful weight loss.

- a. **Diet** – It must demonstrate that appropriate caloric restriction was prescribed and explained, and dietary intake was reviewed since the previous visit with documentation of caloric intake. (The aim is to create a deficit of 500 to 1,000 calories, resulting in a weight loss of 1 to 2 lbs/week.)
 - b. **Physical activity** – Prescription should be consistent with BCN and National Institutes of Health (NIH) guidelines. A generally recommended regimen is 60 to 90 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity five to seven days per week.
 - c. **Behavioral interventions** – Specific strategies to provide tools for overcoming barriers and improving dietary compliance should be reviewed at each patient office visit. Issue must be addressed and documented. For assistance, refer to the BCN Behavioral Health Services contact information below.
 - d. **Pharmacotherapy** – FDA-approved weight loss drugs in selected patients may be appropriate.
4. Documentation that the primary care physician and patient have a good understanding of the risks involved and reasonable expectations that the patient will be compliant with all postsurgical requirements. (Indicate on *Bariatric Surgery Assessment Form: Patient Referral Information*.)
 5. Psychological evaluation must be performed as a presurgical assessment. Providers should contact BCN Care Management at 1-800-392-2512 to request a referral for the psychological evaluation.
 6. Physicians need to be aware of the long-term complications of gastric surgery and follow up with these individuals.

BCN Behavioral Health Services contact information (for behavioral health interventions):

- Providers can contact BCN Behavioral Health Services 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Monday–Friday at 1-800-688-3290.
- Members can contact BCN Behavioral Health Services as follows:
 - HMO: 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday – Friday at 1-800-482-5982 (1-800-649-3777 for TTY users)
 - BCN Advantage: 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., seven days a week at 1-800-431-1059 (1-800-649-3777 for TTY users)
 - BlueCaid: 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Monday – Friday at 1-800-228-8554 (1-800-649-3777 for TTY users)

Questions: Providers can contact BCN Care Management at 1-800-392-2512 for assistance.