



Nonprofit corporations and independent licensees of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association

Non-emergency air ambulance prior authorization program

Overview for Michigan and non-Michigan providers

For Blue Cross commercial and Blue Care Network commercial

June 2023

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This document contains information about the non-emergency air ambulance prior authorization program for commercial members.

Overview

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Blue Care Network have contracted with Alacura Medical Transport Management, LLC to manage prior authorizations for non-emergency air ambulance flights for the following members:

- Blue Cross commercial members
- BCN commercial members

Both Michigan and non-Michigan providers must submit prior authorization requests and receive approval from Alacura.

Blue Cross and BCN implemented this program to reduce high out-of-network costs for air ambulance services that aren't medically necessary. These costs fall largely to members and put significant stress on both groups and members to assume financial responsibility. The prior authorization process lowers costs by directing services to in-network providers.

Note: Providers don't need to request prior authorization for emergency air ambulance flights. Flights are considered emergency transports when the member can't safely wait six hours for takeoff.

Requirements and exclusions for non-emergency flights to be payable

This section lists requirements and exclusions for non-emergency flights.

Requirements

The following requirement must be met for non-emergency air ambulance flights to be payable.

- The member's benefits must include coverage for air ambulance transport. Benefit determinations are based on the contract that's in effect for the member at the time the service is provided. Air ambulance transport involves either fixed-wing or rotary-wing vehicles.
- Air ambulance transport must take the member to the nearest acute care facility that's capable of providing the care necessary or to a capable facility within a 25-mile radius of the nearest facility.
- Air ambulance transport must be medically necessary. The need for air ambulance transport is determined by the following:
 - The member's condition poses a serious and immediate risk to their health, and the services required to treat the illness or injury are not available in the facility where the member is currently receiving care.
 - Ground transportation isn't appropriate for the member's condition, making air transport medically necessary.

For additional requirements, see our *Air Ambulance Services medical policy*. To view this document, go to the [Medical Policy Router Search](#) webpage on **bcbsm.com**, enter the name of the medical policy in the Policy/Topic Keyword field and press *Enter*.

Exclusions

Air ambulance transportation isn't payable in the following situations:

- The requirements listed above aren't met.
- The member is pronounced dead and this is communicated to the air ambulance provider before transportation to the member pick-up site has begun.
- The transport is going somewhere other than the nearest acute care facility or it's going beyond the 25-mile radius of the nearest capable facility.

- The transport is provided without prior authorization by an entity that isn't licensed to provide air ambulance services (for example, a commercial airline). Exceptions must be approved by Blue Cross or BCN prior to transport.
- Transport is provided without prior authorization by a fire department, a rescue squad or an emergency transport provider whose fees are in the form of donations.

For additional exclusions, see our *Air Ambulance Services medical policy*. To view this document, go to the [Medical Policy Router Search](#) webpage on **bcbsm.com**, enter the name of the medical policy in the Policy/Topic Keyword field and press *Enter*.

Types of air transport and what to do

Here's what to do based on the situation:

| Transport type and situation | What to do |
|---|--|
| Emergency transport — when the patient cannot safely wait six hours to take off | You don't need to request prior authorization — even if there are delays due to weather or stabilizing the patient. Transport the patient as soon as possible. |
| Non-emergency transport in which the flight is going to the nearest acute care facility that's capable of providing the care necessary or to a capable facility within a 25-mile radius of the nearest facility | You must request and obtain prior authorization from Alacura prior to the flight. Important! If the provider doesn't obtain prior authorization, the flight will be considered a noncovered benefit and the patient may have to pay the entire cost. |
| Non-emergency transport in which the flight is going somewhere other than to the nearest acute care facility capable of providing the care necessary or to a capable facility within a 25-mile radius of the nearest facility | |

How to request prior authorization

[Michigan's prior authorization law](#)* requires health care providers to submit prior authorization requests electronically for commercial members. Alternate submission methods are allowed in the case of temporary technological problems, such as power or internet outages.

Prior to the flight, submit prior authorization requests as follows:

1. Access the web form in the Alacura PreAuth Portal.

| Access method | Steps |
|--|---|
| Through our provider portal — for Michigan providers | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Log in to our provider portal (availity.com*). 2. Click <i>Payer Spaces</i> on the menu bar and then click the BCBSM and BCN logo. 3. Click the <i>Alacura Provider Portal</i> tile on the Applications tab. <p>If you have issues accessing the portal using this method, contact Availity® Client Services at 1-800-AVAILITY (282-4548).</p> |
| Through our provider portal — for non-Michigan providers who are registered with Availity | <p>Access Alacura's web form at alacura.com/preauth*.</p> <p>If you have issues accessing the form, call Alacura at 1-844-608-3674.</p> |
| Through our provider portal — for non-Michigan providers who aren't registered with Availity | |
| Through the Alacura website | |

2. Complete all fields in the web form. Note the following:
 - Be sure to enter contact information. A nurse will contact the requestor if additional information is needed.
 - In the Medical History field, enter a short description of the member's condition and the reason for the transport.

- Upload supporting documentation. Alacura will review the request when all supporting documentation has been received. You can attach files in the following formats: JPG, PNG and PDF. When files are done uploading, a checkmark appears to the right of the file name and the Done button is available.

For details on how to complete other fields, see the [How to complete the fields in the Alacura PreAuth Portal](#) section below.

3. Click the *Submit Case* button.

If additional information is needed, a nurse will contact the requestor.

If you have trouble while working in the web form, call Alacura at 1-844-608-3674.

If you're experiencing temporary technological problems that prevent you from accessing Alacura's provider portal, use one of the following methods to submit prior authorization requests:

- Call Alacura at 1-844-608-3674. Nurses are available 24/7 to receive your request and begin the review process.
- Complete the [Air ambulance flight information \(non-emergency\)](#) form and fax it to the number at the top of the form.

How to complete the fields in the Alacura PreAuth Portal

Here's information on how to complete the fields in the web form.

Notes:

- Some fields contain a drop-down list of selections for you to choose from. Here's how these fields look:



Type
--None--

- Fields that include a magnifying glass have a lookup function. In these fields, type all or part of your response. If the appropriate response doesn't appear, click + *New Account* to open a window in which you can add the appropriate response. You don't need to fill out all of the fields in the window. If you're adding a contact person's name, be sure to enter contact information.



Insurance
Search Accounts...



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| Field | Details or notes |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Case Details section | |
| Delegated Client | Choose <i>BCBS Michigan</i> . |
| Caller Contact Account | Enter the employer name of the person making the request (for example, the name of the facility or ambulance service). When you enter your first prior authorization request, you may need to click + <i>New Account</i> to add the employer name. |
| Type | Choose <i>Air – Fixed Wing</i> or <i>Air – Rotor</i> . |
| Caller’s Source | <i>Sending Facility</i> and <i>Provider</i> are the most frequent choices. |
| Requester Type | Select <i>Facility Web</i> or <i>Provider Web</i> . |
| Review Type | Select <i>Urgent</i> . |
| Contact Details section | |
| Contact Name | Enter the name of the person who is submitting the request. |
| Contact Email | Enter the email address of the person who is submitting the request. |
| Contact Phone | Enter the phone number of the person who is submitting the request. |
| Contact Fax | Enter the fax number of the person who is submitting the request. |
| Patient Information section | |
| Patient | Enter the patient’s name. |
| Group # | Enter the patient’s insurance group number. |
| DOB | Enter the patient’s date of birth. |
| Member # | Enter the patient’s member or subscriber ID. |
| Insurance | Type all or part of the name of the member’s insurance company. If it isn’t listed, click + <i>New Account</i> to add it. |
| Transport Details section | |
| Provider | If an ambulance provider has already been chosen for the transport, enter the ambulance provider’s name here. When you enter your first prior authorization request, you may need to click + <i>New Account</i> to add the provider. |
| In-network with host state | If the ambulance provider is in-network with the patient’s insurance company, select Yes. If not, select No. If you aren’t sure, leave the field blank. |



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| Field | Details or notes |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| NPI | Enter the ambulance provider's National Provider Identifier. |
| Tax Id | Enter the ambulance provider's tax ID. |
| Ordering Physician | Enter the name of the ordering provider. |
| Estimated Date Needed | Enter the estimated date on which the non-emergency flight will take place. |
| Sending Facility | Enter the name and address of facility where patient will be picked up. When you enter your first prior authorization request, you may need to click + <i>New Account</i> to add the facility. |
| Receiving Facility | Enter the name and address of the facility to which the patient will be transferred. When you enter your first prior authorization request, you may need to click + <i>New Account</i> to add the facility. |
| Sending Contact | Enter the name and phone number of the case manager or social worker who is coordinating the patient's transfer. |
| Receiving Contact | If available, enter the name and phone number of the contact who will receive the patient at the receiving facility. |
| Medical History | Enter a short description of the patient's condition and the reason for the transport. |
| Healthcare Procedures section | |
| HCPC Codes | Enter all applicable HCPCS codes, separated by commas. |
| ICD Codes | Enter all diagnosis codes that are relevant to the transfer, separated by commas. |
| Additional fields | |
| Upload file | Click this button to attach supporting documentation, such as medical records and other documents Alacura will need to review the case. You can attach files in the following formats: JPG, PNG and PDF. When files are done uploading, a checkmark appears to the right of the file name and the Done button is available. |

How to check the status of a prior authorization request

To check the status of a prior authorization request, call Alacura at 1-844-608-3674.

How Alacura communicates authorization determinations

When Alacura has made a decision, they'll communicate their decision by calling. They'll also fax or email a determination letter.

Where to find billing information

See the document titled *Billing instructions: Air ambulance services* for information about how to bill emergency flights with an ET modifier and for other billing details. To access this document:

1. Log in to our provider portal (availability.com).
2. Click *Payer Spaces* on the menu bar and then click the BCBSM and BCN logo.
3. Click the *Resources* tab.
4. Click *Secure Provider Resources (Blue Cross and BCN)*.
5. Click *Billing and Claims* on the menu bar and do one of the following:
 - For Blue Cross commercial members, click *Blue Cross*. In the Blue Cross page, click the *Air ambulance billing instructions* link.
 - For BCN commercial members, click *BCN and BCN Advantage*. In the BCN and BCN Advantage page, click the *Air ambulance services* link.

Additional information about prior authorization requirements

You can find additional information about prior authorization requirements in the following documents:

| Line of business | Document |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Both Blue Cross and BCN commercial | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air ambulance flight information (non-emergency) form • <i>Air Ambulance Services medical policy</i> — To view this document, go to the Medical Policy Router Search webpage on bcbsm.com, enter the name of the medical policy in the Policy/Topic Keyword field and press <i>Enter</i> |
| Blue Cross commercial | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Blue Cross Commercial Provider Manual</i> — Look in the Ambulance Services chapter. To access the manual, log in to our provider portal (availability.com), click <i>Payer Spaces</i> on the menu bar, click the BCBSM and BCN logo, click the <i>Resources</i> tab and then click <i>Provider Manuals</i>. • Provider Preauthorization & Precertification Requirements document |



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| Line of business | Document |
|------------------|---|
| BCN commercial | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>BCN Provider Manual</i> — Look in the “Air ambulance services” section of the Utilization Management chapter • BCN Referral and Authorization Requirements document • BCN Non-Michigan providers: Referral and authorization requirements document |

*Clicking this link means that you’re leaving the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Blue Care Network website. While we recommend this site, we’re not responsible for its content.

Alacura Medical Transport Management is an independent company that manages the authorization of non-emergency flights for Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Blue Care Network members who have commercial plans.

Availity is an independent company that contracts with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Blue Care Network to offer provider portal and electronic data interchange services.