

Medical Policy: CLINICAL DECISION-MAKING

Benefit Type: Medi-Cal

Original Date: Jan. 18, 2013 | **Last Review Date:** May 15, 2026 | **Effective Date:** June 4, 2026

Policy Statement

In accordance with the state Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) it is the policy of Gold Coast Health Plan (GCHP) to adhere to evidence-based medical necessity guidelines when reviewing requests for clinical services including services which are determined to be investigational or experimental.

Clinical decision making considers regulatory requirements, medical necessity criteria, and approved GCHP evidence-based clinical guidelines.

Purpose

To outline the decision-making hierarchy applied when considering coverage criteria for medical necessity determinations.

Health Equity Statement

GCHP is committed to the vision in which all Californians equitably benefit from resources and systems that give everyone the opportunity to achieve their optimal health, resulting in communities that thrive.

GCHP adopts the American Medical Association (AMA) and DHCS commitments to whole-person centered, evidence-based and integrated strategies to advance health equity, addressing social and structural drivers of health. Decisions are therefore based on the evidence-based criteria as well as considerations of members' social and structural drivers of health, and considerations that the decisions create no harm nor exacerbate existing harms.^{1,2}

Definitions

Evidence-Based Guidelines (EBG): Systematically developed nationally recognized clinical guidelines to guide health care decisions with the aim of optimizing patient care.

MCG: Clinical guidelines grounded in the latest published scientific evidence and regularly updated to reflect continual advances in clinical knowledge.

UpToDate: Web-based clinical decision support resource, which uses physician authors, editors, and peer reviewers to perform comprehensive literature reviews and formulate evidence-based treatment recommendations.

Decision Hierarchy

GCHP and its contracted providers adhere to the following decision-making hierarchy when considering coverage criteria for medical necessity determinations:

- DHCS Medi-Cal Provider Manual
- In the absence of Medi-Cal guidelines, GCHP will apply MCG decision support guidelines.

- In the absence of MCG guidelines, GCHP will apply UpToDate guidelines.
- In the absence of Medi-Cal, MCG, or UpToDate, guidelines GCHP will use resources described in the Plan’s Decision-Making Resources Guideline.

In coverage situations where coverage criteria are not fully established in applicable Medi-Cal Provider manual, MCG, or UpToDate guidelines, GCHP may create publicly accessible internal coverage criteria that are based on current evidence in widely used treatment guidelines or clinical literature to include, but not limited to:

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) – Clinical Information	http://www.ahrq.gov/clinic/
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)	http://www.cdc.gov
U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)	http://www.fda.gov
National Comprehensive Cancer Network	https://www.nccn.org
National Library of Medicine – PUBMED	http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sites/entrez
UpToDate (Subscription)	http://www.uptodate.com

Specialty Societies

Allergy and Immunology	American Academy of Asthma, Allergy and Immunology (AAAAI) http://www.aaaai.org
Anesthesiology	American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA) http://www.asahq.org
Colon and Rectal Surgery	American Society of Colon & Rectal Surgeons (ASCRS) http://www.fascrs.org
Dermatology	American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) http://www.aad.org
Emergency Medicine	American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) http://www.acep.org
Family Medicine	American Academy of Family Practice (AAFP) http://www.aafp.org
Internal Medicine	American College of Physicians (ACP) http://www.acponline.org
Medical Genetics	American College of Medical Genetics (ACMG) http://www.acmg.net
Neurological Surgery	American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS) http://www.aans.org
Nuclear Medicine	American College of Nuclear Medicine (ACNM) https://acnmonline.org/

Obstetrics and Gynecology	American College of Obstetricians & Gynecologists (ACOG) http://www.acog.org
Ophthalmology	American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) http://www.aao.org
Orthopedic Surgery	American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons (AAOS) http://www.aaos.org
Otolaryngology	American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery (AAO-HNS) http://www.entnet.org
Pathology	College of American Pathologists (CAP) http://www.cap.org American Society for Clinical Pathology (ASCP) http://www.ascp.org
Pediatrics	American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) http://www.aap.org
Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation	American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (AAPM&R) http://www.aapmr.org
Plastic Surgery	American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) https://www.plasticsurgery.org/
Preventative Medicine	American College of Preventive Medicine (AAPM) http://www.acpm.org American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (ACOEM) http://www.acoem.org
Psychiatry and Neurology	American Psychiatric Association http://www.psych.org American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) http://www.aacap.org American Academy of Neurology (AAN) http://www.aan.com Child Neurology Society (CNS) http://www.childneurologysociety.org
Radiology	American College of Radiology (ACR) https://www.acr.org American Society for Therapeutic Radiation and Oncology (ASTRO) http://www.astro.org
Surgery and Vascular Surgery	American College of Surgeons (ACS) http://www.facs.org
Thoracic Surgery	Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS) http://www.sts.org

Urology	American Urological Association (AUA) http://www.auanet.org
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Subspecialty Societies

Cardiology	American College of Cardiology (ACC) http://www.acc.org
Clinical Cardiac Electrophysiology	Heart Rhythm Society (HRS) http://www.HRSonline.org
Critical Care Medicine	Society of Critical Care Medicine (SCCM) http://www.sccm.org
Endocrinology, Diabetes and Metabolism	American Academy of Clinical Endocrinologists AACE http://www.aace.com Endocrine Society http://www.endocrine.org
Gastroenterology	American Gastroenterological Association (AGA) http://www.gastro.org American College of Gastroenterology (ACG) https://gi.org/guidelines/
Geriatric Medicine	American Geriatrics Society (AGS) http://www.americangeriatrics.org
Geriatric Psychiatry	American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry (AAGP) http://www.aagponline.org
Gynecologic Oncology	Society of Gynecologic Oncologists (SGO) http://www.sgo.org
Hematology	American Society of Hematology (ASH) http://www.hematology.org
Hospice and Palliative Medicine	American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine (AAHPM) http://www.aahpm.org
Infectious Disease	Infectious Disease Society of America (IDSA) http://www.idsociety.org
Medical Toxicology	American College of Medical Toxicology http://www.acmt.net
Nephrology	American Society of Nephrology (ASN) http://www.asn-online.org
Neuroradiology	American Society of Neuroradiology (ASNR) https://www.asnr.org
Oncology	American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) http://www.asco.org

Pain Medicine	American Pain Society (APS) https://painmed.org/clinician-resources/clinical-guidelines
Pulmonary Disease	American College of Chest Physicians (CHEST) http://www.chestnet.org
Reproductive Endocrinology/Infertility	American Society for Reproductive Medicine (ASRM) http://www.asrm.org
Rheumatology	American College of Rheumatology (ACR) http://www.rheumatology.org
Sleep Medicine	American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) http://www.aasmnet.org
Sports Medicine	American Orthopedic Society for Sports Medicine (AOSSM) http://www.sportsmed.org
Surgery of the Hand	American Society for Surgery of the Hand (ASSH) https://www.assh.org
Transplant Hepatology	American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases (AASLD) http://www.aasld.org American Society of Transplant Surgeons (ASTS) http://asts.org/
Undersea and Hyperbaric Medicine	Undersea and Hyperbaric Medical Society (UHMS) http://www.uhms.org
Vascular and Interventional Radiology	Society of Interventional Radiology (SIR) http://www.sirweb.org

References

1. American Medical Association (AMA). (2023, December 21).
2. [AMA Center for Health Equity Mission and Guiding Principles](#).
3. [Medicare Coverage Determination Process](#)
4. [DHCS Medi-Cal Provider Manuals](#)

Disclaimer

Guidelines provide references identified at the time of review. New guidelines or medical literature may emerge and/or been published. Treating healthcare professionals are solely responsible for diagnosis, treatment and medical guidance. GCHP regularly reviews and updates these guidelines to provide the most current information.



History

MEDICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE GUIDELINE HISTORY			
Adopted By MAC	Reapproved	Revised	Retired
January 18, 2013			
	July 24, 2014		
	July 30, 2015		
	July 28, 2016		
	July 27, 2017		
		July 26, 2018	
		July 25, 2019	
		July 23, 2020	
	July 22, 2021		
		July 21, 2022	
		July 20, 2023	
		July 18, 2024	
MAC Sunset on July 18, 2024			
CREDENTIALING PEER REVIEW COMMITTEE (C/PRC) GUIDELINE HISTORY			
Adopted By CPRC	Reapproved	Revised	Retired
		June 5, 2025	
		June 6, 2026	