

# Preferred Radiology Provider (PRP) Program Frequently Asked Questions

## 1. What procedures require precertification and when?

Precertification of all positron emission tomography (PET) scans began April 1, 2006.

Precertification of computerized axial tomography (CT) and computed tomographic angiography (CTA) tests began July 1, 2006. Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and magnetic resonance angiography (MRA) tests require precertification as of November 1, 2006.

Effective September 1, 2010, Blue Advantage members require precertification for PET scans, CT, CTA, MRI and MRA tests.

## 2. Do imaging services provided in a hospital inpatient or emergency room setting require a precertification?

No. PET scans, MRI, MRA, CT and CTA tests ordered during an emergency room treatment visit, while in the observation unit, or during an inpatient stay, do not require a precertification.

## 3. Which medical providers are affected by the PRP Program?

- All freestanding diagnostic facilities, hospital outpatient diagnostic facilities, and any physician's office that provides PET scans, MRI, MRA, CTA or CT tests.
- All providers that order PET scans, MRI, MRA, CTA and CT tests are required to precertify those procedures prior to services being rendered in these locations. Included are Preferred Medical Doctors (PMD), Blue Advantage® Doctors (effective September 1, 2010), Participating Chiropractors, Preferred/Blue Advantage Certified Registered Nurse Practitioners and Preferred Physician Assistants.

## 4. If a Primary Care Network physician refers a patient to a specialist who determines that the patient needs a PET scan or CT test, who needs to request the precertification?

The physician who orders the image should request the precertification. In this case, it would be the specialist.

## 5. Do all Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama contracts require precertification?

The PRP precertification requirement includes PMD and Blue Advantage (effective September 1, 2010) cardholders when a PMD or Blue Advantage Doctor provides treatment. National Accounts Service Company (NASCO), Federal Employee Program (FEP) and out-of-state Blue Cross contracts are excluded from our PRP precertification process. Providers should check eligibility and benefits to determine a member's precertification requirements.

## 6. Is the referring provider or the radiologist subject to Physician Profiles?

The referring provider and the imaging provider are profiled.

## 7. When a radiology group has multiple locations, will Blue Cross credential each specific location or the physician?

Each imaging location is reviewed and credentialed for each modality provided. The PRP participating status continues to be site specific.



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**8. Current PRPs are required to be certified by the American College of Radiology (ACR).**

**Does the PRP Network, managed by CareCore National, LLC (CCN), utilize ACR accreditation?**

Yes, as well as, Intersocietal Commission for the Accreditation of Nuclear Medicine (ICANL), Intersocietal Commission for the Accreditation of Computed Tomography Laboratories (ICACTL) and Intersocietal Commission for the Accreditation of Magnetic Resonance Laboratories (ICAMRL). In addition to these accreditation entities, CCN performs scan quality reviews.

**9. Is a radiology group that does not own equipment, but only contracts to provide the professional interpretation, required to complete the Practice Assessment Tool?**

No. The Practice Assessment Tool should be completed by the diagnostic imaging entity that owns the equipment and bills the global services. The radiologist that reads at that specific location must be listed.

**10. Will CCN visit all PRP locations?**

Yes. CCN conducts an onsite visit with all PRP locations to review staffing, practice activity, availability, reporting, radiation protection, emergency cart equipment, medications, and operating policies and procedures.

**11. If a provider does not initially meet CCN's standards, will there be a grace period to correct the deficiencies?**

If a deficiency is identified, CCN will work with the physician to determine a timeframe for corrective action. If patient safety is compromised, credentialing may be suspended until the problem is resolved.

**12. What process applies for general radiology?**

General radiology services such as X-ray, ultrasound or mammography are not subject to precertification or CCN credentialing criteria. These services continue to be included as a PMD covered service.

**13. Do the imaging centers need to conduct a regular peer review of their images and reports?**

Yes. Peer reviews are one element of the site assessment and should be conducted by the imaging center on a regular basis. Regular peer reviews are one element of quality services, also.

**14. What is the precertification telephone and fax number for CCN?**

A precertification may be requested by calling CCN toll free at 1-866-803-8002 or by sending a fax to 1-866-466-6964.

**15. What are CCN's days and hours of operation?**

CCN is available from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Central Standard Time (CST) Monday through Friday. CCN is closed in observance of the following holidays:

New Year's Day	Memorial Day
Independence Day	Labor Day
Thanksgiving Day and the Friday Following	Christmas Day

Peak calling hours are 8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

**16. How do I obtain the most current medical policy regarding the PRP Network?**

All information regarding this program, including Medical Policies, is available on the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama website, [www.bcbsal.com](http://www.bcbsal.com). Please see the dedicated [Preferred Radiology Program](#) web page.

### **17. What information is needed to obtain a precertification?**

- Patient's Name, Date of Birth and Contract Number
- Ordering Physician's Information
- Imaging Facility Name, Telephone Number and Fax Number
- Requested Tests [Physicians' "Current Procedural Terminology" (CPT) Code or Description]
- Working Diagnosis
  - Signs and Symptoms
  - Results of Relevant Tests
  - Relevant Medications

If initiating the precertification by telephone, it is best to have the medical chart available.

### **18. What information can I find on the Blue Cross website?**

The Blue Cross website is designed to serve as the comprehensive information source for the PRP Program. Our site includes a full overview of this program and specific details including which procedures require precertification, precertification numbers, and how to initiate a request for precertification on the website or via fax.

### **19. What if the referring provider's office does not know the specific test that needs to be ordered?**

CCN will assist the physician's office in identifying the appropriate test based on presented indications and the CPT code. CCN medical directors are also available for assistance.

### **20. If the referring provider orders a CT/CTA or MRI/MRA without contrast, but the radiologist thinks it would be more appropriate to perform the service with contrast, will that require a correction to the precertification on file?**

No. The radiologist has the ability to make that change without a call to or permission from CCN.

### **21. If the referring provider obtains an approved precertification for a specific CPT code and the radiologist determines that another CPT code is more appropriate, can the radiologist make that change?**

Yes. The radiologist must call CCN within two business days to update the CPT code precertification request. Medical necessity criterion is still applied.

### **22. How can the referring provider indicate a particular case is urgent?**

For **urgent** cases during CCN's regular business hours (Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. CST), please initiate those requests by calling CCN at 1-866-803-8002 and clearly advising the intake coordinator that the case is urgent. If the clinical reviewer is unable to approve the case, the referring physician may join the call and request to speak directly with one of CCN's physicians to expedite the urgent request. This physician-to-physician discussion should allow for prompt precertification determination by the conclusion of the call.

Decisions for urgent requests initiated via **fax** during CCN's regular business hours will be rendered within three hours of receipt of the necessary information. Be sure to write, "URGENT" on the request.

Upon approval, precertification approval numbers will be issued and posted to *ProviderAccess*.

**23. What if the patient requires an urgent test and it is after CCN’s regular business hours, a weekend or a holiday?**

For urgent requests after CCN’s normal business hours, a weekend or a holiday, the referring provider should proceed with ordering the image. The referring provider needs to request the precertification within two business days of the service by providing the clinical indications for the examination, including the reason it was deemed urgent. Medical necessity criterion is still applied. Upon approval, precertification approval numbers are issued and posted to *ProviderAccess*.

**24. How long does the precertification process take?**

If all the necessary information is available at the time of the telephone call and the request meets criteria, approval can be made within ten minutes on average. For fax requests, determinations can be made within 24 hours.

**25. Does CCN employ physicians other than radiologists to review precertification requests?**

CCN employs and/or contracts with physicians of various specialties to respond to network needs.

**26. How are all parties notified if the precertification is approved or not?**

The referring provider, imaging provider and hospital can verify if a precertification has been approved or not approved by checking the status via *ProviderAccess* on the Blue Cross website. Referring providers are notified of the precertification determination by telephone. Faxed approvals are issued in the event the telephone communication is unsuccessful or the provider specifically requests a written confirmation. Written notification is provided upon request if the rendering provider contacts CCN Customer Service.

If a precertification is not approved, the referring provider is informed of the reason for the denial, as well as what information is needed to reconsider the decision. Denial reasons are available through *ProviderAccess*.

**27. If the precertification is approved, is the patient limited to a particular Preferred Radiology Provider?**

No. The purpose of the precertification is to determine medical necessity.

**28. Is there an appeal process if a precertification is not approved?**

Yes. Appeal rights are detailed in communications sent to providers with each adverse determination.

**29. Can a diagnostic facility initiate the precertification for the referring provider?**

The precertification should be initiated by the physician that has all the clinical information and determines the need for the diagnostic test. Therefore, it is the referring physician’s responsibility to obtain the precertification. In addition, the referring physician should retain all clinical information.

**30. What type of precertification information is available through *ProviderAccess* on Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama’s website?**

*ProviderAccess* provides the following information via the precertification status function:

- Precertification/Case Number
- Status
- CPT Code
- Procedure
- Patient ID
- Site Name
- Site Location
- Precertification Date
- Expiration Date
- Non-Certified Reason, if applicable

**31. What if the website is not available?**

If the website is unavailable, you can call CCN toll free at 1-866-803-8002 to verify the precertification.

**32. How long will a precertification approval be valid?**

Precertifications are valid for a period of 45 days from the date of approval.

**33. A precertification is valid for 45 days. If a patient comes back within that time frame for follow-up and another image is needed, will a *new* precertification be required?**

Yes.

**34. Does the precertification/case number have to be included on the claim form when filing for the imaging services?**

No.

**35. Can a referring provider utilize the services of a third-party to transmit information to and receive information from CCN?**

The intent of the program has always been for referring physicians to provide clinical justification for the referral, which must be supported by the patient's medical record.

It is at the discretion of the referring physician to select a method to complete the precertification process. However, it is the responsibility of the referring physician to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the information provided to CCN.

Failure to comply with the precertification requirements may result in claim refunds or other steps that affect your continued participation in the PRP or PMD Program.

**36. Why is Blue Cross adopting the new 10/01/2010 Care Core National equipment standards for the Preferred Radiology Provider advanced imaging network and in some cases lowering the MRI/CT/PET reimbursements for those preferred network providers that do not meet the new equipment standards?**

Based on the latest advanced imaging technologies Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama is committed to offering the highest value to our members by enabling our preferred network providers in the form of accurately diagnosing, reducing unnecessary duplicate images and determining appropriate treatment strategies. The adoption of Care Core National's latest equipment standards will ensure that we move forward in achieving the goal of providing the most efficient highest quality advanced imaging services to our members.

**37. If a Freestanding Preferred Radiology Site has more than one machine within the same modality and one machine is a substandard machine as defined by the new 10/01/2010 CCN equipment standards will all machines within this specific modality and site be reimbursed at the lower reimbursement amounts?**

Yes. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama goal is to provide the highest possible value to our members with our advanced imaging network providers through optimizing the image quality performed by our network providers.