
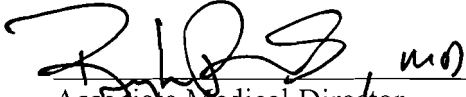
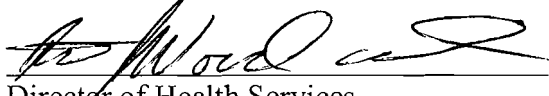


**KERN HEALTH SYSTEMS  
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

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RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT HEAD: Director of Health Services							
Review Date	2009-06						
Effective Date	09/30/09						
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Approved		Date	9/30/09
	Carol Sorrell, R.N. Chief Executive Officer		
Approved		Date	9/18/09
	Associate Medical Director		
Approved		Date	9-1-09
	Director of Health Services		

**POLICY<sup>1</sup>:**

Medicine is far from an exact science, and it is an area of knowledge that is rapidly changing. In recognition of this, Kern Health Systems understands that, at times, a patient may disagree with the diagnostic and treatment plan offered by a primary care provider or specialist. At times, a second medical opinion is needed to resolve controversy or help a patient make a choice between available treatment options.

Second medical opinions are customarily performed by a physician not affiliated with the physician rendering an initial opinion so that the second opinion is provided without bias. Exceptions to this guideline can be made. Members have a right to a second opinion in most circumstances. A request for a second opinion may come from a physician or directly from the member.

KHS will provide second medical opinions in accordance with state and federal regulations and the guidelines outlined in this policy

**PURPOSE:**

To provide guidance for the request and provision of second opinions.

**DEFINITIONS:**

<b>Physician</b>	One acting within his or her scope of practice and who possesses a clinical background, including training and expertise relating to the particular illness, disease, condition, or conditions associated with the request for a
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	second opinion.
<b>Second medical opinion</b>	An evaluation of a patient or a patient's clinical records by a physician with the intent of confirming, augmenting, or refuting an initial medical opinion.

**PROCEDURE:**

**1.0 REQUEST**

Requests for a second opinion may originate from the member or a health care professional. Authorizations for second opinions will be granted through the referral process.

Referral requests for second opinions should document the initial opinion and the person requesting the second opinion (usually the member, the PCP, or the initial specialist). Justification for a second opinion may include, but is not limited to:

- A. The member questions the reasonableness or necessity of recommended surgical procedures or medical treatment plan.
- B. The member questions a diagnosis or plan of care for a condition that threatens loss of life, loss of limb, loss of bodily function, or substantial impairment, including, but not limited to, a serious chronic condition.
- C. The clinical indications are not clear or are complex and confusing, a diagnosis is in doubt due to conflicting test results, or the treating health professional is unable to diagnose the condition, and the member requests an additional diagnosis.
- D. The treatment plan in progress is not improving the medical condition of the member within an appropriate period of time given the diagnosis and plan of care, and the member requests a second opinion regarding the diagnosis or continuance of the treatment.
- E. The member has attempted to follow the plan of care or consulted with the initial provider concerning serious concerns about the diagnosis or plan of care.
- F. The recommendations of the first consultation have been clearly documented.
- G. The reason the member desires a second opinion must be clearly documented.
- H. The provider of the second opinion must understand what is being requested. The provider of the second opinion is ethically prohibited from providing anything other than a recommendation.
- I. If the circumstances find the first opinion and the second opinion are not in agreement, the Associate Medical Director will review the recommendations and decide on the course of action. This may involve a third opinion.

**1.1 Associate Medical Director Review**

All requests for second opinions are reviewed by the KHS Associate Medical Director or designee and granted at his/her discretion. Such review is intended to make sure that a request for a second opinion is not capricious and has a potential to benefit the patient. The ultimate criteria used in reviewing requests for second medical/surgical opinions is whether

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the second opinion could potentially lead to improved health or well being of the patient or assist the patient's physicians in providing the most effective medical care. The Associate Medical Director also considers the following broad criteria in the review process:

- A. Is the area of medicine controversial such that additional perspective would clarify alternatives?
- B. Are multiple diagnostic or treatment plans the current standard of practice in the community?
- C. Is there a possible non-standard treatment or an experimental treatment that has shown a high probability of being effective for the diagnosed disease and for the specific patient?
- D. Is there reasonable doubt that the diagnosis from the initial opinion is incorrect or should be modified?
- E. Would a second opinion assist the patient in making a choice when multiple diagnostic or treatment options are presented?

The Associate Medical Director may seek the advice of other experts when needed to clarify the issues involved.

**1.1.1 Timeliness of Decision**

Authorization/denial and second opinion evaluation is accomplished in a timely manner. Authorization/denial of the request is accomplished within 72 hours from the plan's receipt of request, whenever possible, in the setting where enrollee's condition poses an imminent and serious threat to his/her health, including potential loss of life, limb, or other major bodily function or lack of timeliness would be detrimental to enrollee's ability to regain maximum function.

The timeline for responding to second opinion requests is made available to the public upon request. Any amendment to the timelines will be filed with the Department of Managed Health Care within 30 days of the amendment.<sup>2</sup>

**2.0 PERFORMANCE OF APPROVED SECOND OPINIONS**

Second medical opinions are provided by a KHS contracted PCP, specialist, or other licensed health care provider acting within the scope of practice and who possesses clinical background including training and expertise, related to the particular illness or condition associated with the request for a second opinion. Enrollees may seek a second opinion from any provider that meets these requirements after authorization by KHS. Exceptions to this guideline are made only if there are no contracted providers capable of providing a valid second opinion. In this case, KHS authorizes a non contracted physician/specialist agreed upon by the requesting party to provide the second opinion. Fees for opinions from non-contracted providers are negotiated by Provider Relations staff within the required time constraints. The non-contracted physician/specialist is informed that the fees agreed upon shall constitute full compensation for covered services rendered to the member. The physician/specialist also agrees not to bill or assess any surcharge to KHS members except for applicable copayments as indicated on the approved referral form. The

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copayment amount for second opinions is the same amount applicable to contracted providers.

The physician provides KHS with a consultation report, including any recommended procedures or tests that the second opinion physician believes appropriate. When the appointment for a second opinion is made, the physician is made aware of the requirement to provide the member and original provider with a report.

**3.0 RESULTS AND FURTHER CARE**

If the second opinion confirms the initial opinion, it is expected that the patient will receive further care from the initial physician unless there is a compelling reason to change physicians.

If the second opinion differs from the initial opinion, the patient must choose which physician will continue to provide the needed medical services. The member's primary care physician and/or the Associate Medical Director assists the member in these matters as needed.

**4.0 ASSOCIATE MEDICAL DIRECTOR INITIATED SECOND OPINION**

At times the KHS Associate Medical Director may initiate a second medical opinion. This may occur when the Associate Medical Director has a significant concern about a proposed diagnostic or treatment plan and is unable to come to a resolution by discussing the case with the requesting physician.

**5.0 ADDITIONAL OPINIONS**

Requests for additional medical opinions are reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Approvals/denials of such requests are processed in the same manner as all other requests for services as outlined in *KHS Policy and Procedure #3.22 – Referral Process*.

**6.0 DELEGATION OF SECOND OPINION DETERMINATIONS**

Second opinion determinations are determined by the Plan and are not delegated to providers.

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<sup>1</sup> **Revision 2009-09:** Routine review by Utilization Management Department. **Revision 2002-06:** Revised per DHS Comment (04/05/02). **Revision 2002-02:** Information was previously included in Policy #3.22 - Referral Process. Created stand-alone policy for simplification purposes.

<sup>2</sup> Health and Safety Code, Section 1383.15 (c)