

Illinois Health Connect Referral System Implementation – Phase I

In follow-up to previous provider notices, the Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS) and Illinois Health Connect are announcing the implementation of Phase I of the Illinois Health Connect Referral System on or before **September 1, 2009**.

Phase I of the Illinois Health Connect Referral System is being implemented to continue the ongoing efforts to connect Illinois Health Connect patients with their medical homes. By doing so, the patient's PCP becomes familiar with their medical needs and ensures they receive the necessary preventive and primary care, including immunizations and screening, thus improving the quality of care for the patient through better coordination and management of services by the PCP.

Phase I requires patients to be seen by their own PCP or a provider or clinic affiliated with their PCP. PCPs seeing patients enrolled in Illinois Health Connect but not enrolled on their panel, or on an affiliated PCPs panel on the date of service, must obtain a referral from the patient's PCP in order to be reimbursed by HFS for services provided. PCPs will be able to submit referrals for their Illinois Health Connect patients to see other PCPs through the Illinois Health Connect Provider Portal via the secure MEDI system and directly with Illinois Health Connect via fax and phone. Specialists will not require a referral in Phase I.

For Phase I of the Referral System implementation, HFS had hoped to allow for a six-month informational edit transition period before turning rejection edits on and rejecting claims as a result of no referral being entered into the Illinois Health Connect Referral System. Due to budget constraints, the Illinois Legislature is recommending a more rapid informational edit transition period. Based on this recommendation, HFS hopes to provide a three-month informational edit transition, however, final determination of the transition period cannot be made until the requirements of the final budget agreement are clear.

During the informational edit transition period, claims that require a referral from the patient's PCP, but no referral is entered into the Illinois Health Connect Referral System, will continue to be processed and paid by HFS without the referral. For these claims, the PCP's remittance advice will indicate which services required a referral and would have been rejected by HFS for lack of a referral from the patient's PCP in the Illinois Health Connect Referral System.

As the implementation of the referral system proceeds, PCPs should continue to encourage patients seeking services in their office, but not enrolled on their panel or on an affiliated PCPs panel on the date of service, to see their PCP first. Reinforcement by PCPs of the medical home concept will encourage Illinois Health Connect enrollees to

access services available with their PCP and build upon the foundation of the medical home, resulting in better coordination and continuity of care for these patients.

Once the informational edit transition period has concluded, all services by PCPs for Illinois Health Connect patients not enrolled on their panel, or on an affiliated PCPs panel, on the date of service, will require a referral be registered in the Illinois Health Connect Referral System by the patient's PCP in order to be reimbursed for services provided. If no referral is registered by the patient's PCP, the claim will not be processed or reimbursed by HFS.

More information about the implementation of the Illinois Health Connect Referral System, including training opportunities, outreach efforts, policies for use of the Referral System and clarification of the services that require or do not require a referral, will be distributed to all PCPs by Illinois Health Connect Provider Services within the next few weeks.