



**EFFECTIVE DATE:** 12|17|2019  
**POLICY LAST UPDATED:** 01|27|2021

## OVERVIEW

Coverage determinations, including medical necessity, for Medicare Advantage Plan members are made in accordance with the applicable Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) payment policies, National Coverage Determinations (NCD) and Local Coverage Determinations (LCD).

Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island (BCBSRI) must follow CMS guidelines, such as national coverage determinations or local coverage determinations for all Medicare Advantage Plan policies. Therefore, Medicare Advantage Plan policies may differ from Commercial Products. In some instances, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Rhode Island benefits for Medicare Advantage Plans may be greater than what is allowed by CMS.

## MEDICAL CRITERIA

Not applicable

## PRIOR AUTHORIZATION

Not applicable

## POLICY STATEMENT

Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island makes coverage determinations in accordance with all current CMS National Coverage Determinations and Local Coverage Determinations.

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Rhode Island applies the following defined hierarchy for policy determinations.

1. National Coverage Determinations are the primary source for policy determinations.
2. If there is no NCD, and one Medicare Administrative Contractor (MAC) which has an LCD *and* exclusive jurisdiction for an item or service, BCBSRI utilizes that particular LCD. This applies when there is only one provider/laboratory for the particular item or service, so the MAC for that region processes all claims for that item or service.

Jurisdiction for proprietary laboratory services furnished by an independent laboratory normally lies with the MAC serving the area where the laboratory is located. However, there are some situations where a regional or national lab vendor has locations in various states. In these instances the LCD from the jurisdiction where the lab is headquartered would be used.

3. If there is no NCD and no exclusive jurisdiction situation, BCBSRI utilizes the LCDs under the direction of the local Medicare Administrative Contractor (MAC) for Rhode Island's jurisdiction.
4. If there is no NCD, no exclusive jurisdiction situation, and no LCD from the Rhode Island regional MAC, BCBSRI will apply policy determinations developed using peer-reviewed scientific evidence.

When a service requires prior authorization, and CMS documented criteria in an NCD or LCD is being followed, a policy will not be produced. See the Related Policies Section for further information.

CMS payment policies, NCDs, and LCDs are subject to change. BCBSRI applies the most current versions of the payment policies, NCDs, and LCDs in making coverage determinations. Providers are responsible for reviewing CMS payment policies and other available CMS guidance.

## **COVERAGE**

Benefits may vary between groups and contracts. Please refer to the appropriate Evidence of Coverage for applicable benefits/coverage.

## **BACKGROUND**

Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island's internally developed policies are based on published guideline statements, physician specialty society recommendations, and other forms of credible scientific evidence published in peer reviewed medical literature, suggesting a causative relationship between the health service and improved patient outcomes.

### **Definitions**

1. Local Coverage Determinations: A Local Coverage Determination is a decision by a Medicare Administrative Contractor whether to cover a particular service on a MAC-wide, basis. Codes describing what is covered and what is not covered can be part of the LCD. This includes, for example, lists of CPTs or HCPCs codes that spell out which services the LCD applies to, lists of ICD-10-CM codes for which the service is covered and even lists of ICD-10-CM codes for which the service is not considered reasonable and necessary.

2. Medicare Administrative Contractor (MAC): a network of private organizations contracted with CMS that carry out the administrative responsibilities of traditional Medicare (Parts A and B). The network is awarded a geographic jurisdiction to provide administrative functions for Medicare Part A and Part B beneficiaries. MACs are multi-state, regional contractors.

### **Rhode Island's current MACs are:**

- National Government Services (NGS) for A/B services. Rhode Island is part of Jurisdiction K for A/B services
  - National Government Services: <https://www.ngsmedicare.com>
- Noridian for durable medical equipment. Rhode Island is part of Jurisdiction A for durable medical equipment.
  - Noridian Healthcare Solutions: <https://med.noridianmedicare.com>

3. National Coverage Determinations: coverage determinations made by CMS that outline the extent to which specific services, procedures, or technologies are within the scope of a Medicare benefit category: being considered "reasonable and necessary" for the diagnosis or treatment of an illness or injury, and which Medicare will cover on a national basis.

CMS NCD alphabetical index: <https://www.cms.gov/medicare-coverage-database/indexes/ncd-alphabetical-index.aspx?bc=AgAAAAAAAAAA&>

The hierarchy for policy determinations is from Chapter 4 of the Medicare Managed Care Manual.

## **CODING**

Not applicable

## **RELATED POLICIES**

Genetic Testing Services

Prior Authorization via Web-Based Tool for Durable Medical Equipment

Prior Authorization via Web-Based Tool for Procedures

## **PUBLISHED**

Provider Update, March 2021  
Provider Update, February 2020  
Provider Update, January 2018  
Provider Update, December 2016

## **REFERENCES**

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Medicare Managed Care Manual. Chapter 4, Sections 90.1, 90.4.1, 90.5

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