

## **Bariatric Surgery Protocols**

### **Overview**

CenCal Health is dedicated to ensuring the appropriateness of care for members, while addressing medical necessity and health care trends. In general, CenCal Health follows State Medi-Cal guidelines in determining medical need criteria, but may develop additional criteria or processes to ensure that medically necessary services are being provided to Members.

CenCal Health's goal is to reduce the surgical risk associated to bariatric surgery and improve member compliance. In line with this, CenCal Health has created a comprehensive outline of program requirements and prerequisites for bariatric surgery, which is based upon State medical documentation requisites.

### **Eligibility Requirements**

Providers should always verify a member's eligibility with CenCal Health and check if the member has other health care coverage prior to submitting a referral or prior authorization request. If the member has other health care coverage, providers must submit a request for authorization to the other insurance carrier. Only after receiving a denial should providers submit an authorization request to CenCal Health.

Please note that bariatric surgery will only be approved for members if the additional eligibility requirements below are met:

1. Candidates for bariatric surgery must be between the ages of 19 and 60 years of age. Rare exceptions may be made for members 18 years of age or younger if there are extenuating risks to health that are well documented and reflect significant co-morbidities with risk including, but not limited to, diabetes with HbgA1C greater than 9, systolic blood pressure greater than 145, diastolic blood pressure greater than 95, or airway obstruction during sleep unrelieved by CPAP.
2. The member must have a BMI ratio of weight to the square of height of one of the following:
  - a. Greater than 40
  - b. Greater than 35 with substantial co-morbidity such as life threatening cardiovascular or pulmonary disease, sleep apnea, uncontrolled diabetes mellitus, or severe neurological or musculoskeletal problems that is likely to be alleviated by the surgery.
3. The member has had severe obesity for at least five years.
4. The member has failed to sustain weight loss on conservative regimens.
5. The member has none of the following contraindications to the surgery:
  - a. A major life threatening disease not susceptible to alleviation by the surgery,
  - b. An alcohol or substance abuse problem in the last six months,

- c. A severe psychiatric impairment,
- d. A demonstrated lack of compliance and motivation,
- e. Depression,
- f. Frequent episodes of uncontrollable binge eating.

### **Responsibilities of the Primary Care Physician**

A Primary Care Physician (PCP) may refer their assigned members to specialists for medically necessary services by issuing Referral Authorization Forms (RAFs).

Members being referred to a bariatric surgeon must first complete a Bariatric Weight-Loss Surgery Seminar offered by Cottage Health System. These seminars are held throughout the year in Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties. The schedule of these seminars can be found by accessing the Cottage Health System website at [www.cottagehealthsystem.org](http://www.cottagehealthsystem.org)>>news and events>>classes, lectures and seminars>>Bariatric Weight Loss Surgery Seminars.

After attending the Bariatric Weight-Loss Surgery Seminar, members will receive a certificate of attendance that they must provide to their PCP. Upon receipt, the PCP may then refer the member to the bariatric surgeon.

If the PCP is submitting the RAF electronically, the certificate of attendance with the RAF number indicated should be faxed to CenCal Health's Health Services Department at (805) 692-5140 for review. If the PCP is submitting a paper RAF, the RAF and the certificate of attendance should then be faxed to (805) 692-5140.

### **Responsibilities of the Bariatric Surgeon**

Bariatric surgeons must ensure they have an approved RAF prior to an office consultation. Prior authorization requirements for surgery and other medical services remain unchanged and still apply.

Bariatric surgeons are responsible for the following:

1. Performing a pre-operative medical consultation to ensure the member is an acceptable surgical candidate.
2. Ensuring a member has a clear and realistic understanding of the following:
  - a. Available alternatives
  - b. Risks of surgery, including the possibility of morbidity and even mortality.
3. Coordinating pre and post-operative dietary evaluations and nutritional counseling.
4. Coordinating psychological screening for the purpose of a psychological clearance prior to surgery. Screenings must consist of a comprehensive pre-surgical evaluation of the member's medical record, clinical interviews, and as necessary the usage of other psychological instruments and intake forms.



5. Making available supportive resources.
6. Ensuring that the surgery is being performed at a facility that has been certified as a Center of Excellence by the American Society for Bariatric Surgery or certified a Level 1 Bariatric Surgery Center by the American College of Surgeons.

For questions regarding this process, contact the Provider Services Department at (805) 562-1676.