

Effective: 1/1/2011, 2/2012; 6/2012

Reviewed/Revised: 2/2013; 4/2013; 11/2013, 01/22/2014;
03/31/2014; 02/24/15; 05/11/15; 10/15/15; 12/11/15;
02/11/15; 02/11/16; 5/12/16; 8/11/16; 2/9/17; 8/10/17;
2/8/18; 2/16/18; 2/23/18; 2/28/18; 5/10/18; 8/9/18; 11/8/18;
1/3/19; 11/12/19; 2/13/20; 5/14/20, 2/11/21, 2/17/22;
11/10/22, 2/2/23, 2/8/24, 11/27/24, 2/20/25, 8/14/25

DIRECT SPECIALTY REFERRAL

Purpose: The purpose of the expansion of the direct specialty referral for **VCHCP** members is to facilitate member referrals from contracted providers to contracted specialists for consultation, follow up visits and subsequent in office and non-in office procedures and diagnostic testing. A specific referral process and referral form has been developed and provided to primary care providers for use in making direct referrals.

Policy: The direct specialty referral allows contracted Primary Care Physicians to directly refer members to certain contracted specialty providers for an initial consult and appropriate follow up visits without requiring a Treatment Authorization Request (TAR) submission and prior authorization from the Health Plan. Additionally, specialists can perform certain procedures during the initial consultation and follow up visits without prior authorization from the Health Plan. Previously, requests for additional visits beyond two (2) follow up visits either from the Primary Care Physician or from the Specialist required prior authorization. However, now, any follow up visits will not require prior authorization as long as the member has seen the specialist within a rolling year and the visit is for the original problem. If the member has not seen the specialist for a year, or if the member requires a consultation for a new problem, a new direct specialty referral form will be required from the primary care physician. Any associated procedures not listed below will continue to require prior authorization as they did previously.

In addition, urgent care and Emergency Room (ER) physicians may now directly refer members to Orthopedics and Cardiology specialty for urgently required consultation.

Neurologists can directly refer to Pain Management Specialists, Physiatrists [Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Specialist (PM&R)] and Orthopedics. Pain Management Specialists and Physiatrists (PM&R) can directly refer to Orthopedics. Pain Management Specialists and Physiatrists (PM&R) can refer back and forth based on the type of referral and access.

Neurosurgery can directly refer to Pain Management Specialists, Physiatrists [Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Specialist (PM&R)], Neurology and Orthopedics. Pain Management Specialists, Physiatrists (PM&R), Neurology and Orthopedics can refer back and forth based on the type of referral and access.

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2/8/18; 2/16/18; 2/23/18; 2/28/18; 5/10/18; 8/9/18; 11/8/18;
1/3/19; 11/12/19; 2/13/20; 5/14/20, 2/11/21, 2/17/22;
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Pain Management Specialists and Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Specialist (PM&R) can directly refer members for pain management injections to Santa Paula Hospital Interventional Radiology.

Physical therapy and occupational therapy will be allowed a direct referral by the Primary Care Physicians for an initial evaluation and an additional seven (7) visits up to a total of eight (8) visits. Thereafter, the request for additional visits can come from the physical therapy and occupational therapy providers.

In addition, nutritional counseling may be directly referred.

In addition to primary care physicians, direct referral for physical therapy can be made by the following specialists: Orthopedics, Rheumatology, Neurosurgery, Neurology, Podiatry, Physiatry (physical medicine and rehabilitation) and Pain Management. Once the Health Plan authorizes a Hand/Plastic Surgery specialist to see a VCHCP member, the Hand/Plastic Surgery Specialist may directly refer the member to physical therapy and to occupational therapy.

Background: Previously all requests for initial consultation and two (2) follow up visits with all specialty providers including all the procedures performed by the specialists during these said visits as well as additional follow up office visits, required prior authorization from the Health Plan.

Procedure: All VCHCP contracted specialists can be directly referred by PCPs using the direct referral form [EXCLUDING TERTIARY REFERRALS, (e.g., UCLA AND CHLA)]. Referrals to Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy also use this form. In addition, referrals to nutritional counseling also use this form. Note: Members can self-refer to OB-GYN.

Note that this policy does not apply to any tertiary care or non-contracted provider referrals. All tertiary care referrals and referrals to non-contracted providers continue to require approval by the Health Plan through the TAR procedure.

The Plan's primary care providers have been provided a two (2) part referral authorization form. The referring provider or office completes the form. Part 1 is given to the member to be taken to the specialist or treatment facility when the

member presents for the first visit. Part 2 is maintained by the primary care provider. The Primary Care Provider may also directly fax the direct specialty referral form to the specialist.

The following are Procedures and Services included with Direct Referrals and do not require prior authorization from the specialists. Once the specialists are seeing the members, there is no authorization required for these procedures and services. Primary care physicians and specialists not mentioned below continues to require prior authorization for these procedures and services listed below. Note: these are applicable for Contracted Providers' offices and Selected Facilities Only.

	SPECIALTY	
1	Allergy	All allergy services
2	Cardiology	Office Procedure: EKG, Ziopatch (with Irythm), Ziopatch (interpretation by Cardiologist), Pacemaker monitoring. Facilities Treatment (i.e., VCMC Clinic): Exercise stress echo, echocardiogram, doppler echo, trans-thoracic echo, doppler echo (pulse wave used in conjunction with doppler echo, exercise stress test (not thallium), stress tests (all kinds) for chest pain, Holter monitor for arrhythmias, 2D-echo with Doppler for CHF, troponin test
3	Dermatology	Office Procedures: destruction of lesions by any method and repair, biopsy and excision of lesions and repair, Moh's procedures except when plastic surgery is required for closure.
4	Endocrinology	Office Procedure: Thyroid FNA biopsy; Diabetes Medical Services at Las Islas Family Medical Group such as Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT), Group Education Counseling. –and Diabetes Outpatient Self-Management Training,
5	ENT	Office or Facilities Treatment: oronasal endoscopy, laryngoscopy Office Procedures: removal of cerumen, nasal endoscopy, use of binocular microscope, nasopharyngoscopy, removal of foreign body from EAC, excision of lesion vestibule of mouth without repair, biopsy of anterior tongue, biopsy of lip, excision of tongue lesion without closure, biopsy of floor of mouth, biopsy of oropharynx, I&D of peritonsillar abscess, control of nasal hemorrhage, anterior, simple fine needle aspiration of thyroid without image guidance, thyroid core biopsy, adult tympanostomy tube placement under local anesthesia; audiometry testing; tympanometry.
6	Gastroenterology	Facilities Procedure: Colonoscopy Screening and diagnostic colonoscopy; upper GI endoscopy, monitored anesthesia care (MAC) for colonoscopy and upper GI endoscopy only
7	General Surgery	Office Procedures: needle biopsy, excision of lesions (non-cosmetic); Psychiatric Diagnostic Evaluation (90791) associated with gastric bypass.
8	Hematology-Oncology	CBC & Ferritin laboratory services
9	Neurology	Office Procedures: EMG-NCV, EEG

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10	Neurosurgery	Office Procedures: EMG-NCV, EEG
11	Obstetrics/ Gynecology	Office Procedures: Colposcopy and biopsy, endometrial biopsy, insertion and removal of IUDs for contraception, insertion of mirena for control of menorrhagia or endometrial hyperplasia, vulvar biopsy, insertion of nexplanon. Note: Members can self-refer to OB-GYN.
12	Ophthalmology	Office Procedures: medical examination and evaluation/treatment, visual field examination, ophthalmic diagnostic imaging, ophthalmic biometry, glaucoma testing, ophthalmoscopy, fluorescein angiography and fundus photography with interpretation and report, diabetic retinal screening, removal of a superficial corneal foreign body at the slit lamp.
13	Oral & Maxillofacial	Orthopantomogram (panoramic x-ray)
14	Orthopedics	Office Procedures: arthrocentesis, steroid injections, fracture care including fracture reduction, treatment of dislocations, casting and immobilization, administration of Hyaluronate derivative injections. Can dispense selected prefabricated orthotics.
15	Pain Management and Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation	Office Procedures: trigger point injections, joint aspiration/injection, carpal tunnel injection, nerve block, EMG-NCV, EEG, chemodenervation, facet injection, epidural injection, Toradol injection, all with or without image guidance.
16	Plastic Surgery	Biopsies; Steroid injections for trigger finger, scar management and finger joint pathology
17	Podiatry	Office Procedures: Toenail/nail plate removal; trimming of toenails for diabetic patient; local nerve, tendon sheath and ligament injections of anesthetic and/or steroid; paring/cutting hyperkeratotic lesions; nail debridement; arthrocentesis, aspiration, and injection of joint/bursa. Can dispense selected foot orthotics for diagnosis of diabetes
18	Pulmonology	Office Procedures: pulmonary function test, office spirometry, office oximetry.
19	Rheumatology	Office Procedures: joint aspiration/injection
20	Thoracic Surgery/Vascular Surgery	
21	Urology	Office Procedures: cystoscopy for hematuria, prostate ultrasound/biopsy, urethral dilations for stricture, bladder scan/ultrasound for post void residual.
22	Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy	Initial evaluation and additional 7 visits up to a total of 8 visits. Effective 1/1/19, For PT providers, only: Additional 16 physical therapy visits beyond the initial eight (8) direct referral visits will NO LONGER require prior authorization. Requests for additional therapy beyond the 24 visits will require prior authorization with a submission of a TAR form including the initial therapy evaluation and treatment notes.



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		Effective 1/1/19, For OT providers, only: Additional 16 occupational therapy visits beyond the initial eight (8) direct referral visits will <i>NO LONGER</i> require prior authorization. Requests for additional therapy beyond the 24 visits will require prior authorization with a submission of a TAR form including the initial therapy evaluation and treatment notes.
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The Primary Care Providers were informed about the Ventura County Medical Center (VCMC) Referral Center Process. Many specialists on the panel of the Plan are specialists in the Ventura County Medical Center (VCMC) medical clinics and affiliated clinics. New appointments for these specialists are made through the VCMC Referral Center. These specialties are Audiology, Cardiology, Dermatology, Endocrinology, ENT, Hepatitis C, Infectious Disease, Nephrology, Neurology, Neurosurgery, Pain Management, PMR, Pediatric Neurology, Podiatry, Pulmonology and Rheumatology. For a referral to any of the VCMC physicians in these specialties, the direct referral form should be sent to the VCMC Referral Office via fax or e-Referral system. The fax number is 805-677-5263.

Below is the list of Specialties and providers handled by the VCMC Referral Center:

Cardiology	Dermatology	Endocrinology	Gaspro/GI Positive Fit
Dr. Abdi-Moradi	Dr. Chambers	Dr. Fogelfeld	Dr. P. Sanchez
Dr. Dharawat	Dr. Lynn	Dr. Pinzone	Karina Jonusas, PA-C
Dr. Nitzel	Dr. Weintraub	Dr. N. Shah	
Dr. Olson	Melissa Ambrosio, PA-C	Dr. Leibovitch	
	Logan Horejsi, PA-C		
Gastroenterology (GI)	Hepatitis C	Infectious Disease	Orthopedics
Dr. Sagar	Dr. Muzaffer	Dr. Muzaffer	Dr. Benson
Dr. Underwood	Dr. Underwood		Dr. Hargett
Dr. Verma	Alex Murray, PA-C		Dr. Lamb
Dr. Laurie			Dr. Ragsdale
Dr. Narang			Dr. Stennette
Karina Jonusas, PA-C			Dr. Takara
			Dr. Wu
			Casey Lowe, PA-C
			Ross Monroe, PA-C
			Jessica Cataldo-Ramirez, PA-C
Orthopedics Hand	Pediatric Gastroenterology	Pediatric Orthopedics	Podiatry
Dr. Vohra	Dr. M. Patel	Dr. Early	Dr. Pearson
Dr. Leong	Lauren Rotkis, NP	Dr. Maguire	Dr. Roberg
			Dr. Vines
Pulmonology	Renal/Nephrology	Rheumatology	



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Dr. Bajawa	Dr. Ahoubim	Dr. Greger	
Dr. Lipper	Dr. S. Chan	Dr. Mory	
	Dr. Gandhi	Dr. Singh	
	Dr. Mapara		
	Dr. C. Wong		
	Dr. J. Yan		

- A. Attachments: None
- B. References: None
- C. Reviewers/Authors: Albert Reeves, MD & Faustine Dela Cruz, RN; Date: 1/1/2011
Committee Review: UM on 2/10/11 & QA on 2/22/11
Reviewed/No Changes by: Faustine Dela Cruz, RN, Cecilia Cabrera-Urango, RN & Albert Reeves, MD in January 2012
Committee Review: UM: February 9, 2012; QAC: February 28, 2012
Reviewed/Update by: Faustine Dela Cruz, RN & Albert Reeves, MD in June 2012
Committee Review: UM: August 16, 2012; QAC: August 28, 2012
Reviewed/No Updates by: Faustine Dela Cruz, RN, Cecilia Cabrera-Urango, RN & Albert Reeves, MD
Committee Review: UM: February 14, 2013; QAC: February 26, 2013
Reviewed/Updated by: Faustine Dela Cruz, RN & Albert Reeves, MD in April 2013
Committee Review: UM: May 9, 2013; QAC: May 28, 2013
Reviewed/Updated by: Faustine Dela Cruz, RN & Albert Reeves, MD in November 2013
Committee Review: UM: November 14, 2013; QAC: November 26, 2013
Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz & Catherine Sanders, MD in January 2014
Committee Review: UM: February 13, 2014; QAC: February 25, 2014
Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz & Catherine Sanders, MD on March 2014
Committee Review: UM: May 8, 2014; QAC: May 27, 2014
Reviewed/Updated by Catherine R. Sanders, MD on January 2, 2015
Committee Review: UM: February 12, 2015; QAC February 24, 2015
Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz & Catherine Sanders, MD on May 2015
Committee Review: UM: May 7, 2015; QAC June 2, 2015
Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz & Catherine Sanders, MD in October 2015
Committee Review: UM: November 12, 2015; QAC November 24, 2015
Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN, Catherine Sanders, MD & Robert Sterling, MD on December 2015
Committee Review: UM: February 11, 2016; QAC February 23, 2016
Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN, Catherine Sanders, MD & Robert Sterling, MD on May 2016
Committee Review: UM: May 12, 2016; QAC May 24, 2016
Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN, Catherine Sanders, MD & Robert Sterling, MD in August 2016
Committee Review: UM: August 11, 2016; QAC August 23, 2016
Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN, Catherine Sanders, MD & Robert Sterling, MD in February 2017
Committee Review: UM: February 9, 2017; QAC February 28, 2017



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11/10/22, 2/2/23, 2/8/24, 11/27/24, 2/20/25, 8/14/25

Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN, Catherine Sanders, MD & Robert Sterling, MD in August 2017

Committee Review: UM: August 10, 2017; QAC August 22, 2017

Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN, Catherine Sanders, MD & Robert Sterling, MD in February 2018

Committee Review: UM: February 8, 2018; QAC February 27, 2018

Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN, Catherine Sanders, MD & Robert Sterling, MD on May 2018

Committee Review: UM: May 10, 2018; QAC May 29, 2018

Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN, Catherine Sanders, MD & Robert Sterling, MD in August 2018

Committee Review: UM: August 9, 2018; QAC August 28, 2018

Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN & Robert Sterling, MD in November 2018

Committee Review: UM: November 8, 2018; QAC November 27, 2018

Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN & Robert Sterling, MD in January 2019

Committee Review: UM: February 14, 2019; QAC February 26, 2019

Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN & Howard Taekman, MD in July 2019

Committee Review: UM: November 12, 2019; QAC November 26, 2019

Reviewed/ Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN & Howard Taekman, MD in February 2020

Committee Review: UM: February 13, 2020; QAC February 25, 2020

Reviewed/ Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN & Howard Taekman, MD in February 2020

Committee Review: UM: May 14, 2020; QAC May 26, 2020

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Committee Review: UM: November 10, 2022; QAC November 22, 2022

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Committee Review: UM: February 2, 2023; QAC February 7, 2023

Reviewed/ Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN & Howard Taekman, MD in February 2024

Committee Review: UM: February 8, 2024; QAC February 27, 2024

Reviewed/ Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN & Howard Taekman, MD in February 2025

Committee Review: UM: February 20, 2025; QAC February 25, 2025

Reviewed/ Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN & Robert Sterling, MD in August 2025

Committee Review: UM: August 14, 2025; QAC August 26, 2025

Revision Date	Content Revised (Yes/No)	Contributors	Review/Revision Notes
2/9/17	Yes	Catherine Sanders, MD; Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN	Annual review; updated with expansion of specialists for direct referral.

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8/10/17	Yes	Catherine Sanders, MD; Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN	Added audiometry testing in the procedure's ENT can perform in the office as part of the direct referral Added procedures for Plastic Surgery that can be done by specialist as part of the direct referral.
2/8/18	Yes	Catherine Sanders, MD; Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN	Annual review: Added local injections of anesthetic and/or steroid under procedures and services included in the direct referral that the specialists (podiatrist) can perform without prior authorization.
2/16/18	Yes	Catherine Sanders, MD; Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN	Added Oral & Maxillofacial specialty to be able to do orthopantomogram (panoramic x-ray) without prior authorization.
2/23/18	Yes	Catherine Sanders, MD; Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN	Updated the services that Podiatrist can perform as part of direct referral without prior authorization
2/28/18	Yes	Catherine Sanders, MD; Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN	Updated the Specialists/providers handled by the VCMC Referral Center
5/3/18	Yes	Catherine Sanders, MD; Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN	Added: Emergency Room (ER) physicians may now directly refer members to Orthopedics specialty for urgently required consultation.
5/29/18	Yes	Catherine Sanders, MD; Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN	Added nutritional counseling to direct referral.
8/8/18	Yes	Catherine Sanders, MD; Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN	VCMC Pain Management Specialists and VCMC Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Specialist (PM&R) can directly refer members for pain management injections to Santa Paula Hospital Interventional Radiology
10/11/18	Yes	Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN	Effective 1/1/19, updated - exclusion for direct referral to contracted Non-VCMC Pain Specialists to office procedures ONLY. Office visits to contracted Non-VCMC Pain Specialists can be directly referred by PCPs.
10/11/18	Yes	Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN	Effective 1/1/19, For PT providers, only: Additional 16 physical therapy visits beyond the initial eight (8) direct referral visits will NO LONGER require prior authorization. Requests for additional therapy beyond the 24 visits will require prior authorization with a submission of a

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			TAR form including the initial therapy evaluation and treatment notes. Effective 1/1/19, For OT providers, only: Additional 16 occupational therapy visits beyond the initial eight (8) direct referral visits will NO LONGER require prior authorization. Requests for additional therapy beyond the 24 visits will require prior authorization with a submission of a TAR form including the initial therapy evaluation and treatment notes.
1/3/19	Yes	Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN	Updated list of Specialties and Providers handled by the VCMC Referral Center Updated to rolling year to this portion of policy: follow up visits will not require prior authorization as long as the member has seen the specialist within a rolling year and the visit is for the original problem.
7/31/19	Yes	Howard Taekman, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN, Meriza Ducay, RN	Neurosurgery can directly refer to VCMC Pain Management Specialists, Physiatrists [Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Specialist (PM&R)], Neurology and Orthopedics. VCMC Pain Management Specialists, Physiatrists (PM&R), Neurology and Orthopedics can refer back and forth based on the type of referral and access. Updated procedures and services included with Direct Referrals: For Orthopedics, can dispense selected prefabricated orthotics. Updated procedures and services included with Direct Referrals: For Cardiology, can administer Ziopatch (with Irythm) and Ziopatch (interpretation by Cardiologist).
2/13/20	Yes	Howard Taekman, MD Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN	Annual review; updated VCMC Referral physicians
2/18/20	Yes	Howard Taekman, MD Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN	Added tympanometry to services that ENT provider can perform without prior authorization, as part of direct referral.
8/13/20	Yes	Howard Taekman, MD Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN	Added pacemaker monitoring under procedures Cardiologist can perform in the office.

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2/11/21	Yes	Howard Taekman, MD Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN	UPDATED the list of VCMC Referral Specialists
2/17/22	Yes	Howard Taekman, MD Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN	UPDATED the list of VCMC Referral Specialists UPDATED urgent care and Emergency Room (ER) physicians may now directly refer members to Orthopedics AND CARDIOLOGY specialty for urgently required consultation. Added troponin test to the list services/procedures that do not require prior authorization from the cardiology specialists.
11/10/22	Yes	Howard Taekman, MD Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN	Updated to reflect certain specialties that can refer back and forth to one another. All pain management specialists and perinatology to be able to request certain services without prior authorization. Updated the section on procedures and services that specialists can perform without prior authorization to reflect upper GI endoscopy and Monitored Anesthesia Care (MAC) service for colonoscopy and upper GI endoscopy that Gastroenterology specialty can perform without prior authorization.
2/2/23	Yes	Howard Taekman, MD Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN	UPDATED the list of VCMC Referral Specialists
2/8/24	Yes	Howard Taekman, MD Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN	UPDATED to add removal of a superficial corneal foreign body at the slit lamp under services Ophthalmology can provide without prior authorization. Updated list of specialists handled by the VCMC Referral Center.
11/27/24	Yes	Howard Taekman, MD Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN	UPDATED to add Toradol injection to Procedures and Services included with Direct Referrals and do not require prior authorization from the specialists. UPDATED the list of specialists. UPDAYED: Under Procedures and Services included with Direct Referrals and do not require prior authorization from the specialists, added Psychiatric Diagnostic Evaluation (90791) associated with gastric bypass.



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02/11/15; 02/11/16; 5/12/16; 8/11/16; 2/9/17; 8/10/17;
2/8/18; 2/16/18; 2/23/18; 2/28/18; 5/10/18; 8/9/18; 11/8/18;
1/3/19; 11/12/19; 2/13/20; 5/14/20, 2/11/21, 2/17/22;
11/10/22, 2/2/23, 2/8/24, 11/27/24, 2/20/25, 8/14/25

2/20/25	Yes	Howard Taekman, MD Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN	UPDATED the list of VCMC Referral Specialists
8/14/25	Yes	Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN	Updated to note that members can self-refer to OB-GYN.