

16 - Pharmacy Services

The role of Sierra Health and Life (SHL) Pharmacy Services is to evaluate and determine the appropriateness of quality drug therapy while maintaining and improving therapeutic outcomes. Listed below are the functions performed by SHL's Pharmacy Services Department.

- Prior authorization of medications
- Call center for providers and pharmacies
- Maintenance of Preferred Drug Lists
- Drug member reimbursement/Coordination of Benefits
- Concurrent Drug Utilization Review
- Retrospective Drug Utilization Review

16.1 Prior Authorization of prescription drugs

The prior authorization process involves assessing and screening requests for prescription drug coverage from providers and members. A prior authorization is required for prescription drugs when it is indicated as a requirement per protocol guidelines, the drug is not on the members' formulary, or the request exceeds the plan's quantity limits. The screening process assists SHL in determining if the requested prescription drug is an appropriate therapy for the given diagnosis based on clinical information such as chart notes, lab reports and clinical rationale that is submitted by the provider, current Food and Drug Administration approved diagnosis, and SHL's protocols. The prior authorization process for our Commercial line of business is handled locally by the SHL Pharmacy Services Department.

16.2 How to Obtain Prior Authorization or an Exception for prescription drug coverage

The member, a member's appointed representative or prescribing physician can initiate a prior authorization or an exception request. Prior authorization is a process by which a drug must be approved for coverage before the plan will pay for it, whereas an exception is a request to obtain a non-preferred drug at a lower tier, or to obtain a drug not included in the formulary or the waiver of a utilization management requirement (e.g. step therapy, quantity limit, etc.). For both prior authorization and exception requests, it is the responsibility of the requesting provider to provide pertinent case specific clinical information to support the request for prescription drug coverage. The prior authorization form can be found in the **FREQUENTLY USED FORMS SECTION 21** and must be completely filled out.

Exception and Prior Authorization Requests

To submit a *prior authorization or exception request* online, go to [Online Provider Center](#), and click on **RX Prior Authorizations**.

To submit a *prior authorization or exception request by phone*, call 702-242-7050 #6 or 1-800-443-8197 #6. Hours of operation are 8 a.m. - 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

To submit a *prior authorization or exception request by fax*, fax (702)-242-6751 or 1-(800)-997-9672. Hours of operation are 8 a.m. - 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

To submit a *prior authorization or exception request by mail*, mail to SHL - Pharmacy Services, Attn: Medical Necessity, P.O. Box 15645, Las Vegas, NV 89114-5645.

If you have questions on Commercial requests, need assistance filling out a form, or would like to inquire about the status of an exception or prior authorization request, call Pharmacy Services at 702-242-7050 #6 or 1-800-443-8197 #6, 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.

16.3 Prior Authorization Timeframes

Please note: Required timelines are different for our various lines of businesses and formularies. Timelines are below are goals and normal operations for the Pharmacy Services Department. Actual timelines may differ slightly.

Standard Requests

Routine requests are normally reviewed with a determination rendered within 72 hours. If additional clinical information is needed to render a decision, the provider will be contacted by fax to supply the necessary information. We make every effort to complete all requests that include receipt of ALL necessary clinical information within the allotted timeframe.

Expedited Requests

Expedited requests are for those services which are related to urgent prescription drug coverage that have the potential to become an emergency in the absence of treatment. Expedited requests are normally reviewed with a determination rendered within 24 hours. If additional clinical information is needed to render a decision, the provider will be contacted by fax to supply the necessary information. We make every effort to complete all requests that include receipt of ALL necessary clinical information within the allotted timeframe.

16.4 Denial/Appeal Process

Once a prior authorization request has been denied, the provider has the option to appeal the request. Only a Member, a member’s appointed representative, or prescribing physician may request an appeal.

To request an appeal, a signed written request for an appeal with evidence and allegations of fact or law related to the issues in dispute must be submitted. This means, please write a letter *requesting an appeal* and provide any and all information that you wish to be reviewed.

The number of available appeals is limited. Please ensure you include all information you wish to be reviewed the first time.

Oral requests for an expedited appeal are accepted but must be followed by a written request within 24 hours.

Appeals must be submitted within 180 calendar days from the date of the coverage determination notice.

To request an appeal, please see the contact information below.

Member Services	Member Services Phone	Member Services Fax (appeals)
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Commercial	702-242-7300/800-777-1840	702-242-9431
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16.5 Pharmacy Services Call Center

The Pharmacy Services call center is a dedicated help desk for pharmacies and providers only. Call center representatives are able to assist **retail and other pharmacies** with the following:

- Adjudicating claims online
- Providing eligibility information
- Checking the status of prior authorization

Call center representatives are also able to assist **providers and their staff** with the following:

- Formulary alternatives
- Prior authorization status

Pharmacy Services Representatives are available from Monday – Friday from 8:00 a.m. – 5: 00 p.m. (Pacific Standard Time)

	Telephone Number	Fax Number
Las Vegas Area	(702) 242-7050 #6	(702) 242-6751
Toll Free	(800) 443-8197 #6	(800) 997-9672

16.6 After Hours Call Center

From **5:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. PST Monday through Friday and all day Saturday and Sunday**, all telephone calls from pharmacists, providers, and health plan Member Services staff members are transferred to the claims processing call center staff who then handle all of the telephone calls. Since the claims processors house the claims processing system for SHL, call center staff members have access to information needed to handle the calls appropriately, such as eligibility, medication history, and length of health plan enrollment.

16.7 Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee

SHL utilizes the UnitedHealthcare P&T Committee to assist in the clinical management of the SHL Preferred Drug Lists. Additional operational committees exist that make additional recommendations on tier placement and other clinical programs. SHL pharmacy leadership is present at these committee meetings.

16.8 Changes to the Preferred Drug List

The P&T committee reviews requests for the addition or deletion of a drug from the Preferred Drug List and reviews the entire Preferred Drug List at least annually to maintain a clinically sound drug benefit. The P&T Committee may review drugs in response to:

- Provider requests,
- Member requests,
- Updated guidelines for disease treatment,
- New drug entities added to the market,
- Generic formulations added to the market,
- Products removed from the market due to safety or other concerns, and

- New Food and Drug Administration-approved indications or labeling changes.

Decisions to add or remove a drug from the Preferred Drug List are based on Food and Drug Administration-approved indications, efficacy, adverse effect profile, patient monitoring requirements, patient dosage and administration guidelines, impact on total healthcare costs, and comparison to other preferred agents.

16.9 Published Preferred Drug List

The SHL Preferred Drug List is updated regularly and is available on our web site at www.sierrahealthandlife.com/Provider, click on **Drug List** at the top of the page. Preferred Drug List updates are sent via fax as needed throughout the year. Practitioners are encouraged to use the SHL Preferred Drug List to select the appropriate medications for the members' treatment. Printed copies of the PDL can be made available to members by calling member services.

Upon notification of a drug being withdrawn from the market for safety or other concerns, a notification letter will be sent to affected members and providers within 14 days of a Class I recall and 30 days for a Class II recall informing them of the market change.

16.10 New to Market Exclusions

SHL Commercial plans have a 12-month exclusion that may be exercised before new drugs introduced to the market will be reviewed for Preferred List inclusion or exclusion. This will exclude the coverage of new drugs on the market for less than 12 months and allows for additional safety and clinical data to become available.

16.11 Incentives

SHL **does not** provide incentives to members, providers, or pharmacists for the use of preferred medications. However, the member's co-pay is lower with the use of preferred medications included on the Preferred Drug List. SHL may institute quantity limits on medications if there is no data to support the continued high usage of the quantity/dosage being prescribed.

16.12 Generic Substitution for Commercial Plans

SHL has a mandatory generic substitution policy that requires the dispensing of the generic equivalent when available. A significant cost saving can be achieved through the use of safe, therapeutically equivalent generic drugs. If you or the member chooses the brand-name product when a generic equivalent is available the member is responsible to pay the difference between the cost of the generic and brand name product in addition to the generic co-payment.

16.13 Direct Member Reimbursement of Prescription Drugs

SHL will reimburse a patient for a prescription medication that was paid for in cash if the patient meets the criteria for prescription drug coverage.

Turnaround time is 30 days from the date the Reimbursement Request Form was received.

SHL members can call **(702) 242-7300** or **1-800-777-1840** and request a Direct Member Reimbursement Form or go online to www.sierrahealthandlife.com/Member, click on **I Need Help with**, Click on **Health Plan Forms** then click on **Pharmacy Reimbursement Claim Form** to print out form.

Once the form has been filled out, please mail the form to: **OptumRx Claims Department, P.O. Box 29044, Hot Springs, AR 71903.**

16.14 Drug Utilization Reviews

Drug utilization reviews (DUR) are performed periodically. These reviews monitor the members' medication usage and report any outliers to normal prescription therapy. Comparisons of provider prescribing patterns are made to other providers within the same specialty. Reports are sent to the prescribing provider.

Concurrent Drug Review

SHL has systems, policies, and procedures in place to ensure concurrent drug utilization review prior to each prescription being dispensed to a health plan member at the point of sale. The pharmacy management system edits provide alerts and warning messages to pharmacists when medications that have been ordered may need prior authorization or must meet initial step therapy requirements before specific drugs are dispensed. In addition, other system edits alert pharmacists to potential duplicate drug therapy, possible drug to drug interactions, gender and/or age related contraindications, ordering of incorrect drug or dosages, possible misuse/abuse and over utilization, and underutilization for medications that are prescribed at levels less than the therapeutic recommended minimums.

Retrospective Utilization Review

Retrospective DUR activities are implemented after medications have been dispensed to health plan members. While not as effective as the real-time system edits that are in place in the health plan's pharmacy management system at the point of dispensing, retrospective DUR can address specific medication management issues at the population level. The results of these activities can help further educate health plan management, members, practitioners, and/or pharmacists about important drug management issues.

Periodic DUR is conducted in response to identified medication management or quality issues may focus on:

- Drug-drug interactions
- Medication overuse and potential abuse
- Duplicate therapy

Once initial data analysis on the identified medication management issue has been completed, the health plan reviews the results of the analysis to determine appropriate interventions that may include sending letters to affected members, prescribing physicians, and pharmacists. These letters educate the affected parties about the issue at hand and offer recommendations for change, as necessary.

16.15 Frequently Used Forms

- Medical Necessity Request Form
- MedWatch- For the most updated form, go to:
<http://www.fda.gov/Safety/MedWatch/HowToReport/DownloadForms/default.htm>