
Definition of Investigational

MEDICAL POLICY NUMBER:5

Effective Date: 2/1/2026	COVERAGE CRITERIA	2
Last Review Date: 1/2026	POLICY CROSS REFERENCES.....	3
Next Annual Review: 1/2027	POLICY GUIDELINES.....	4
	HEALTH EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS	4
	POLICY REVISION HISTORY.....	4

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE: Company Medical Policies serve as guidance for the administration of plan benefits. Medical policies do not constitute medical advice nor a guarantee of coverage. Company Medical Policies are reviewed annually and are based upon published, peer-reviewed scientific evidence and evidence-based clinical practice guidelines that are available as of the last policy update. The Company reserves the right to determine the application of medical policies and make revisions to medical policies at any time. The scope and availability of all plan benefits are determined in accordance with the applicable coverage agreement. Any conflict or variance between the terms of the coverage agreement and Company Medical Policy will be resolved in favor of the coverage agreement. Coverage decisions are made on the basis of individualized determinations of medical necessity and the experimental or investigational character of the treatment in the individual case. In cases where medical necessity is not established by policy for specific treatment modalities, evidence not previously considered regarding the efficacy of the modality that is presented shall be given consideration to determine if the policy represents current standards of care.

SCOPE: Providence Health Plan, Providence Health Assurance, and Providence Plan Partners as applicable (referred to individually as “Company” and collectively as “Companies”).

PLAN PRODUCT AND BENEFIT APPLICATION

Commercial

Medicaid/OHP*

Medicare**

*Medicaid/OHP Members

Oregon: Services requested for Oregon Health Plan (OHP) members follow the OHP Prioritized List and Oregon Administrative Rules (OARs) as the primary resource for coverage determinations. Medical policy criteria below may be applied when there are no criteria available in the OARs and the OHP Prioritized List.

**Medicare Members

Note that investigational services are considered “**not medically necessary**” for Medicare members.

COVERAGE CRITERIA

Medical and behavioral health care services may include medical, surgical, diagnostic, substance use or other health care technologies, supplies, equipment, treatments, procedures, services, biological products, or devices.

- I. Medical and behavioral health care services are considered investigational, if **any one or more** of the following criteria are met:
 - A. The health care service does not have final approval from the appropriate governmental regulatory body to be lawfully marketed for the proposed use. The governmental regulatory body must have the authority to regulate new technology and medical/behavioral services and may include, but are not limited to, any of the following:
 1. U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA);
 2. American Hospital Formulary Service;
 3. United States Pharmacopeia Dispensing Information;
 4. American Medical Association Drug Evaluations; **or**

Note: Any approval that is granted as an interim step in the regulatory process (e.g. investigational device exemption [IDE]) is not a substitute for final market approval.

- B. The medical or behavioral health care service is subject to review and approval by an institutional review board (IRB) for the proposed use; **or**
- C. The medical or behavioral health care service is the subject of an ongoing clinical trial that meets the definition of a Phase I, II, or III clinical trial set forth in the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations regardless of whether the trial is actually subject to FDA oversight; **or**

- D. The medical or behavioral health care service is not provided by an accredited institution or provider within the United States or is provided by one that has not demonstrated proficiency in the providing of the services or supplies; **or**
- E. Current, prevailing, peer-reviewed medical literature does not demonstrate the medical or behavioral health care service to be safe and effective for treating or diagnosing the condition or illness for which its use is proposed. This includes, but is not limited to, the following (1.– 4.):
 - 1. The service is not as beneficial or more beneficial as any established alternative;
 - 2. The service does not effectively measure or alter the physiological changes related to a disease, injury, illness or condition;
 - 3. The evidence does not demonstrate that the service has a beneficial effect on health outcomes;
 - 4. The benefits of the service do not outweigh the harms; **or**
- F. The medical or behavioral health care service has not been evaluated by a national professional medical society, a national healthcare organization, or a public health agency; or has been evaluated and determined not to be an appropriate standard of medical practice; **or**
- G. The medical or behavioral health care service requested is not consistent with or does not address the patient’s presenting complaint, injury or illness and is not considered standard of care in the medical community for that condition; **or**
- H. The medical or behavioral test is requested as a panel of services that may be individually proven but when performed as a group or panel, the evidence-based literature does not support the requested service. If any single service/component of the panel test is investigational, then the entire panel is considered investigational. Services/components may include, but are not limited to, any of the following:
 - 1. Proteins
 - 2. Biomarkers
 - 3. Enzymes
 - 4. Analytes
 - 5. Genes
 - 6. Transcripts
 - 7. Mutations

POLICY CROSS REFERENCES

- [Clinical Trials, MP234](#)
- [Definition of Medical Necessity, MP38](#)

The full Company portfolio of current Medical Policies is available online and can be [accessed here](#).

POLICY GUIDELINES

In order to make a determination of the investigational nature of any medical service the following sources of evidence should be considered:

1. Peer-reviewed publications of well-designed and well-conducted studies. Ideally, the overall body of evidence should be of high quality and reported outcomes should be consistent;
2. Technology assessments based on a systematic review of the evidence (e.g., Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Washington State Health Authority, Hayes, ECRI);
3. Evidence-based clinical practice guidelines developed by national organizations and other recognized authorities.

HEALTH EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines health equity as the state in which everyone has a fair and just opportunity to attain their highest level of health. Achieving health equity requires addressing health disparities and social determinants of health. A health disparity is the occurrence of diseases at greater levels among certain population groups more than among others. Health disparities are linked to social determinants of health which are non-medical factors that influence health outcomes such as the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life. Social determinants of health include unequal access to health care, lack of education, poverty, stigma, and racism.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health calls out unique areas where health disparities are noted based on race and ethnicity. Providence Health Plan (PHP) regularly reviews these areas of opportunity to see if any changes can be made to our medical or pharmacy policies to support our members obtaining their highest level of health. Upon review, PHP creates a Coverage Recommendation (CORE) form detailing which groups are impacted by the disparity, the research surrounding the disparity, and recommendations from professional organizations. PHP Health Equity COREs are updated regularly and can be found online [here](#).

POLICY REVISION HISTORY

DATE	REVISION SUMMARY
2/2023	Converted to new policy template.
2/2024	Annual update. No changes.
2/2025	Annual update. No changes.
2/2026	Annual update. No changes.