

Department:	Pharmacy Management	Original Approval:	07/08/2009
Policy No:	PM507	Last Approval:	01/24/2025
Policy Title:	Step Therapy Policy		
Approved By:	Clinical Services Leadership Team		
Dependencies:	N/A		

Purpose

This Community Health Plan of Washington (CHPW) policy describes the processes for approving and implementing Step Therapy protocols and for reviewing and making determinations regarding requests for exemptions from Step Therapy for the Medicaid line of business. CHPW pharmacy align with the state mandated preferred drug list PDL to build its formulary which can include Step therapy guidance for medications on the Apple Health PDL. For medications outside of the PDL, CHPW P&T committee makes decisions on step therapy guidance.

Policy

CHPW uses Step Therapy to promote cost-effective pharmaceutical management when there are multiple effective drugs to treat a condition.

Implementation Guidelines

CHPW follows the step therapy guidance provided by the HCA for medications on the apple health PDL and implements these guidelines with our PBM. For medications that are outside of the PDL the following items are taken into consideration when the P&T committee provides Step Therapy guidance:

1. Step Therapy is used to promote the use of cost-effective drugs before progressing to less cost-effective alternatives.
 - a. Step Therapy requires that one or more “prerequisite” first step drugs be tried before progressing to second step drugs.
 - b. First step medications and the corresponding second step medications are FDA-approved and are used to treat the same conditions.
2. Drugs are considered for Step Therapy based on any of the following criteria:

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- a. There are efficacious, cost-effective drugs to treat the condition in addition to expensive alternatives.
 - b. There is expert consensus on an appropriate sequence of drugs or drug classes to treat a specific condition.
 - c. There is expert consensus that specific drugs are not considered first line treatment.
3. Step Therapy protocols are based upon information from authoritative sources (including peer-reviewed clinical trials, articles, studies, and organizations such as the FDA) considered in light of the characteristics of CHPW's member population and local practice conditions.
4. If medically necessary, a second step medication can be obtained without first trying a first step medication.

Exemption Request

The treating practitioner can request an exemption from the Step Therapy protocol by calling the PBM at 1-844-605-8168 (24 hours a day, 365 days a year). Requests can also be made by fax to 877-251-5896 as well as electronically at www.express-scripts.com/PA or on the CHPW website by following the link under the Prior Authorization Section: <https://www.chpw.org/for-members/pharmacy/>

If the provider or designee calls the PBM, the following steps take place while the provider or designee is on the phone with the PBM.

1. A Clinical Specialist, under supervision of a Clinical Pharmacist, reviews the request for suitable justification based on the written criteria provided by CHPW and either approves the prior authorization or requests additional information from the requesting provider during the call.
2. If the request is approved, the Clinical Specialist informs the requesting provider and a payment authorization is entered in the system.
3. If there is uncertainty whether the request meets the criteria for approval by the Clinical Specialist or Clinical Pharmacist, the information is evaluated by a physician.
 - a. If the physician approves the request, the process continues from the step above.
 - b. If the physician denies the request, the provider is notified either verbally or in writing and the member is informed in writing of the reason for the denial of coverage and also of the process for filing an appeal with CHPW.

Timeframes

All authorization determinations for prescriptions or over-the-counter drugs must be made no later than the following business day after receipt of the request for service unless additional information is required. Any additional information needed must be requested within one business day of the initial request for authorization. Providers have 3 business days to respond to the request. The final determinations must be made no later than one business day after receipt of the additional information.

List of Appendices

- A. Detailed Revision History

Citations & References

CFR	42 CFR § 438.210	
WAC	284-43-2050	
RCW		
LOB & Contract Citation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WAHIMC	IMC Section 17.3: Pharmacy Benefits and Services
	<input type="checkbox"/> BHSO	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Wraparound	
	<input type="checkbox"/> SMAC	
	<input type="checkbox"/> HH	
	<input type="checkbox"/> AHE	
	<input type="checkbox"/> MA/DSNP	
	<input type="checkbox"/> CS	
Other Requirements		
NCQA Elements	UM11	

Revision History

SME Review:	06/25/2009; 05/26/2011; 03/27/2012; 03/28/2013; 04/16/2014; 03/26/2015; 07/07/2015; 03/04/2016; 03/01/2017; 03/02/2018; 03/12/2019; 02/22/2020; 02/23/2021; 02/23/2022; 01/31/2023; 01/22/2024
Approval:	06/08/2012; 06/08/2011; 04/04/2012; 04/19/2013; 04/23/2014; 04/07/2015; 07/22/2015; 03/18/2016; 03/14/2017; 03/13/2018; 03/13/2019; 03/06/2020; 03/10/2021; 02/28/2022; 02/13/2023; 02/21/2024; 01/24/2025

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Appendix A: Detailed Revision History

Revision Date	Revision Description	Revision Made By
06/25/2009	Policy Creation	Eric Guyette
06/08/2010	Approval	MMLT
05/26/2011	Updated Citations Table	Eric Guyette
06/08/2011	Approval	MMLT
03/27/2012	Content Update	Eric Guyette
04/04/2012	Approval	MMLT
03/28/2013	Content update. Updated Citations Table	Reid Yamamoto
04/19/2013	Approval	MMLT
04/16/2014	Review. No Changes	Steven Zona
04/23/2014	Approval	MMLT
03/26/2015	Updated Citation Table, and timeframe	Nonye Connor
04/07/2015	Approval	MMLT
07/07/2015	Added Health Benefit Exchange LOB	Mary Eckhart
07/22/2015	Approval	MMLT
03/04/2016	Minor text edits. Updated citations table.	Mary Eckhart
03/18/2016	Approval	MMLT
03/01/2017	Moved to new template. Minor edits.	Mary Eckhart
03/14/2017	Approval	MMLT
03/02/2018	Moved to new template. Added extra PBM contact methods. Removed Exchange LOB.	Mary Eckhart
03/13/2018	Approval	MMLT
03/12/2019	Reviewed, no changes	Erin Riddle
03/13/2019	Approval	MMLT
02/22/2020	Reviewed, minor edits. Citations table updated.	Rebecka Braband
03/02/2020	Departmental Approval	Yusuf Rashid
03/06/2020	Approval	CMO Cabinet
02/23/2021	Reviewed. Cascade LOB timeframes added.	Rebecka Braband
02/24/2021	Reviewed	Omar Daoud
03/10/2021	Approval	Yusuf Rashid
03/10/2021	Approval	CMO Cabinet

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02/23/2022	Reviewed, no changes. Approval	Omar Daoud
02/28/2022	Approval	CMO Cabinet
01/31/2023	Reviewed, no changes	Omar Daoud
02/13/2023	Approval	Clinical Services Leadership Team
02/19/2024	Reviewed, no changes	Omar Daoud
02/21/2024	Approval	Clinical Services Leadership Team
01/22/2025	No changes	Omar Daoud
01/24/2025	Approval	Clinical Services Leadership Team