Texas Children's Health Plan (TCHP) performs authorization of all occupational therapy treatment

**DEFINITIONS:**

**Standardized tests**: tests used to determine the presence or absence of deficits; evidence-based diagnostic tool or procedure with a standardized administration and scoring process that compares results to an appropriate normative sample.

**Criterion-referenced tests**: tests that measure an member's performance against a set of predetermined criteria or performance standards (e.g., descriptions of what an member is expected to know or be able to do at a specific stage of development or level of education). Criterion-referenced procedures can also be developed informally to address specific questions (e.g., understanding of wh- questions) and to assess response to intervention.

**Co-treatment**: two different therapy services that are performed on the same member at the same time by a licensed therapist for each therapy discipline.

**Acute therapy**: Services for the medically necessary short term treatment of an acute medical condition or an acute exacerbation of a chronic medical condition.

**Chronic Medical Condition**: A medical condition is considered chronic when 120 days have passed from the start of therapy or the condition is no longer expected to resolve or may be slowly progressive over an indefinite period of time.

**Functional Goals**: a series of behaviors or skills that allow the member to achieve an outcome relevant to his/her health, safety, or independence within the context of everyday environments. These goals are specific to the member, objectively measurable within a specified time frame, attainable in relation to the member's prognosis or developmental delay, relevant to the member and family, and based on a medical need.

**Guardian**: The parent, primary caregiver, or legal representative for a member.
1. ECI services do not require prior authorization and must comply with policy stipulated in the Texas Medicaid Provider Procedures Manual, Children’s Services Handbook.

2. All requests for prior authorization for occupational therapy services are received via online submission, fax, phone or mail by the Utilization Management Department and processed during normal business hours.
   
   2.1 Authorization requests must be received no later than five business days from the date therapy treatments are initiated.
   
   2.2 Requests received after the five-business-day period will be denied for dates of service that occurred before the date that the request was received.

3. School-based Services
   
   3.1 Members who are eligible for occupational therapy through the public school system (SHARS) may only receive additional therapy if medical necessity criteria are met as outlined in this guideline.
   
   3.2 Services provided to a member on school premises are only permitted when delivered before or after school hours.

4. Occupational Therapists in the Comprehensive Care Program are eligible to provide telehealth services as written in the current Texas Medicaid Provider Procedures Manual - Telecommunication Services Handbook.
   
   4.1 Occupational therapy may be delivered in-person or via telehealth except when synchronous telephone (audio-only) technology is used
   
   4.2 Procedure codes required to be provided in-person will be referenced from Texas Medicaid Provider Procedures Manual, Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, and Speech Therapy Services Handbook, section 2.9.2.2.1 Telehealth Exclusions

5. Acute Therapy Services
   
   5.1 Acute therapy evaluations do not require prior authorization when provided by an in-network provider.
   
   5.2 Requests for acute occupational therapy services will NOT require documentation from the prescribing provider that a visit for the acute injury or acute exacerbation of the medical condition requiring therapy has occurred within the last 90 days.
5.3 Acute occupational therapy authorization will NOT require evidence of current Texas Health Steps well-checkup for therapy treatment requests of 60 days or less.

5.4 After two 60 day authorized periods, any continued requests for therapy services must be considered as chronic therapy and referred to the appropriate section.

5.5 Out-of-Network acute occupational therapy services require compliance with TCHP Out of Network Services Guideline.

6. Chronic Therapy Services

6.1 Initial chronic therapy evaluation does not require prior authorization when provided by an in-network provider.

6.2 The therapy provider is responsible for maintaining the following documentation, which must be made available when requested:

   6.2.1 A signed and dated prescribing provider’s order for the evaluation
   6.2.2 Clinical documentation that identifies and supports the medical need for the therapy evaluation

6.3 Out of Network chronic therapy evaluations require submission of:

   6.3.1 Signed physician order requesting a therapy evaluation, dated within 60 days prior to the date of therapy evaluation
   6.3.2 Clear documentation of the medical necessity of the requested evaluation this may include: Copy of a physician/physician extender visit note that identifies a need for evaluation or letter of medical necessity signed by the ordering physician that identifies the need for therapy evaluation
   6.3.3 Frequency and dates of service requested cannot exceed those listed on the provider order and the evaluation plan of care

7. Chronic Therapy Services – Initial Treatment Request

7.1 Initial occupational therapy may be approved for scores more than 1.5 standard deviations below the mean in at least one subtest area for norm-referenced standardized tests with a mean of 100 (<78), and more than 1.33 standard deviations below the mean in at least one subtest area for norm-referenced standardized tests with a mean of 10 (<6).

   7.1.2 Behavioral observations, psychosocial factors, and pertinent past history should be included in the assessment.
   7.1.3 In the unusual circumstance that tests with criterion-referenced age equivalency scores are utilized, occupational therapy may be approved if the functional age equivalency is 65% or less than the chronological age.

7.2 Initial Treatment requests require the following documentation:
7.2.1 Order or prior authorization form signed by the referring provider that is dated within 60 days of submission and specifies the frequency and duration of the requested service

7.2.2 Evaluation report and Plan of Care dated within 60 days of submission signed by the ordering physician

7.2.3 Documentation of the diagnosis, reason for referral, and prognosis

7.2.4 Documentation of the date of onset of the member’s condition requiring therapy or exacerbation as applicable - If the condition is congenital, providers should state onset date at birth.

7.2.5 Brief statement of the member’s medical history and any prior therapy treatment. Providers may reference information provided by the member or member's family and identify it as such.

7.2.6 A description of the member's current level of functioning or impairment, to include current **norm-referenced standardized assessment scores.

7.2.7 Developmental age should be adjusted for children born before 37 weeks gestation (based on a 40-week term). The developmental age must be measured against the adjusted age rather than chronological age until the child is 24 months of age. The age adjustment should not exceed 16 weeks.

7.2.8 A statement of the prescribed treatment modalities and their recommended frequency and duration

- Treatment plans developed must include the initial frequency (high, moderate or low) and the expected changes of frequency throughout the duration period requested based on the member’s anticipated therapy treatment needs.

7.2.9 Short and long-term functional treatment goals which are specific to the member’s diagnosed condition or impairment

- Functional goals that refer to a series of behaviors or skills that allow the member to achieve an outcome relevant to his/her health, safety, or independence within the context of everyday environments. Functional goals must be specific to the member, objectively measurable within a specified time frame, attainable in relation to the member’s prognosis or developmental delay, relevant to member and family, and based on a medical need.

7.2.10 List of any adaptive equipment or assistive devices that contribute toward member function. If the member does not have adaptive equipment or assistive devices, indicate that this element is not applicable.

7.2.11 Prescribed home exercise program including the guardian’s expected involvement in the member’s treatment.

7.2.12 Plan for collaboration with ECI, Head Start, or SHARS when applicable

7.3 Formal Re-evaluations should be performed every 180 days or sooner if member’s status changes. Re-evaluations do not require authorization for payment when rendered
in-network. The following documentation is required to request a re-evaluation by an out-of-network provider:

7.3.1 Signed physician order dated within 60 days for re-evaluation.

7.3.2 Requests for re-evaluation should be submitted no sooner than 30 days prior to the expiration of the current treatment authorization period.

8. Chronic Therapy Services – Ongoing Treatment

8.1 Ongoing treatment requests will require the following documentation:

8.1.1 A complete request must be received no earlier than 30 days before the current authorization period expires.

8.1.2 Order or prior authorization form signed by the referring provider that is dated within 60 days of submission and specifies the frequency and duration of the requested service.

8.1.3 ALL of the previously outlined documentation required for initial chronic therapy treatment requests as referred to in section 7.2.

8.1.4 The same **norm-referenced standardized tests must be utilized for re-evaluation as were used to evaluate the member initially unless these are no longer appropriate for the member’s age.

8.1.5 Re-evaluations should document comparison of current and prior **norm-referenced standardized test scores.

8.2 Routine reassessments that occur during each treatment session or visit or for a progress report required for an extension of services or discharge summary are not considered a comprehensive re-evaluation.

8.3 Ongoing therapy MAY NOT be approved when any of the following are met:

8.3.1 All test scores have improved to within 1.33 SD from the mean.

8.3.2 80 or more for tests with a mean of 100.

8.3.3 7 or more for tests with a mean of 10.

8.3.4 The member has not made significant progress towards meeting goals and/or improvement in ** norm-referenced standardized scores.

8.3.5 The member has adapted to the impairment with assistive equipment or devices and is able to perform ADL’s with minimal to no assistance from caregiver at an age appropriate level.

8.3.6 Member can continue therapy and maintain status with a home exercise program and deficits no longer require a skilled therapy intervention.

8.3.7 Member no longer demonstrates functional impairment or has achieved goals set forth in the treatment plan or plan of care.

8.3.8 Member has returned to baseline function.
8.3.9 Member has achieved maximum functional benefit from therapy in progress or will no longer benefit from additional therapy.

8.3.10 Member is unable to participate in the treatment plan or plan of care due to medical, psychological, or social complications; and responsible adult has had instruction on the home treatment program and the skills of a therapist are not needed to provide or supervise the service.

8.3.11 Member demonstrates a plateau in response to therapy/lack of progress towards therapy goals. This may be an indication for therapeutic pause in treatments or, for those under age 21, transition to maintenance level therapy.

9. High Frequency Occupational Therapy

9.1 Therapy provided three times per week for a limited duration of approximately 4 weeks or less or as recommended by the prescribing provider

9.2 Documentation of the medical need to achieve an identified new skill or recover function lost due to surgery, illness, trauma, or acute medical condition with well-defined specific, achievable goals within the requested intensive period

9.3 Therapy provided three times a week or less may be considered for two or more situations:

9.3.1 The member has a medical condition that is rapidly changing

9.3.2 The member has a potential for rapid progress (e.g., excellent prognosis for skill acquisition) or rapid decline or loss of functional skill (e.g., serious illness, recent surgery)

9.3.3 The member's therapy plan and home program require frequent modification by the licensed therapist

9.4 On a case-by-case basis, a high frequency requested which does not meet the above criteria may be considered with all of the following documentation:

9.4.1 Letter of medical need from the prescribing provider documenting the member’s rehabilitation potential for achieving the goals identified

9.4.2 Therapy summary documenting all of the following:

9.4.3 Purpose of the high frequency requested (e.g., close to achieving a milestone)

9.4.4 Identification of the functional skill which will be achieved with high frequency therapy

9.4.5 Specific measurable goals related to the high frequency requested and the expected date the goal will be achieved.

9.5 A higher frequency (4 or more times per week) may be considered on a case-by-case basis with clinical documentation supporting why 3 times a week will not meet the member’s medical needs.
10. Moderate Frequency Occupational Therapy

10.1 Therapy provided two times a week may be considered when documentation shows one or more of the following:

10.1.1 The member is making very good functional progress toward goals.
10.1.2 The member is in a critical period to gain new skills or restore function or is at risk of regression.
10.1.3 The licensed therapist needs to adjust the member’s therapy plan and home program weekly or more often than weekly based on the member’s progress and medical needs.
10.1.4 The member has complex needs requiring on-going education of the responsible adult.

11. Low Frequency Occupational Therapy

11.1 Therapy provided one time per week may be considered when the documentation shows one or more of the following:

11.1.1 The member is making progress toward goals, but the progress has slowed, or documentation shows the member is at risk of deterioration due to the member’s development or medical condition.
11.1.2 The licensed therapist is required to adjust the member’s therapy plan and home program weekly based on the member’s progress.

12. Maintenance Level Occupational Therapy

12.1 Therapy provided every other week, monthly or every three months may be considered when the documentation shows the following:

12.1.1 The therapy plan changes very slowly, the home program is at a level that may be managed by the member or the responsible adult, or the therapy plan requires infrequent updates by the skilled therapist.
12.1.2 Every other week therapy is supported for members whose medical condition is stable, they are making progress, and it is anticipated the member will not regress with every other week therapy.
12.1.3 Progress towards goals is limited or stopped, but documentation supports that ongoing skilled therapy is required to maintain the progress made or prevent deterioration.
12.1.4 Factors are identified that inhibit the member’s ability to achieve established goals (e.g., the member cannot participate in therapy sessions due to behavior issues or issues with anxiety).
12.1.5 Documentation shows the member and the responsible adult have a continuing need for education, a periodic adjustment of the home program, or regular modification of equipment to meet the member's needs.

13. Occupational therapy (OT) services are considered medically necessary when **ALL** the following criteria are met:

13.1 The services requested must be considered under the accepted standards of practice to be a specific and effective treatment for the member’s condition.

13.2 The services requested must be of a level of complexity or the member’s condition must be such that the services required can only be effectively performed by or under the supervision of a licensed occupational therapist, and requires the skills and judgment of the licensed therapist to perform education and training.

13.3 The member’s ability to function in daily activities is impaired.

13.4 There is an expectation that the therapy will result in a practical improvement in or maintain the level of functioning within a reasonable and predictable period of time.

13.5 Member's function could not reasonably be expected to improve as the member gradually resumes normal activities.

13.6 Member's expected restoration potential would be significant in relation to the extent and duration of the therapy service required to achieve such potential.

13.7 The therapy documentation objectively verifies progressive functional improvement over specific time frames.

13.8 The therapy is aimed at:

   - Achieving functional goals.
   - Improving, developing, maintaining, or restoring functions impaired or lost through illness, injury, or deprivation.
   - Improving the ability to perform tasks for independent functioning when functions are impaired or lost.
   - Preventing, through early intervention, initial or further impairment or loss of function.
   - Using purposeful activities to obtain or regain skills needed for activities of daily living (ADL) and/or independent activities of daily living (IADL) or functional skills needed for daily life lost through an acute medical condition, acute exacerbation of a medical condition, or chronic medical condition related to injury, disease, or other medical causes.

13.9 Activities of daily living (ADLs) are activities that include:

   - Bathing: selecting appropriate water temperature and flow speed, turning water on and off; laying out and putting away supplies; transferring in and out
of bathtub or shower; washing and drying hair and body; clean up after task is completed.

- **Dressing:** putting on, fastening, and taking off all items of clothing; donning and removing shoes or prostheses; choosing and laying out weather-appropriate clothing.

- **Eating:** feeding self; using utensils or special or adaptive eating devices; clean up after task is completed.

- **Personal hygiene:** routine hair care; oral care; ear care; shaving; applying makeup; managing feminine hygiene; washing and drying face, hands, perineum; basic nail care; applying deodorant; routine skin care; clean up after task is completed.

- **Toileting:** using commode, bedpan, urinal, toilet chair; transferring on and off; cleansing; changing diapers, pad, incontinence supplies; adjusting clothing; clean up after task is completed.

- **Locomotion or mobility:** moving between different locations.

- **Positioning:** positioning their body while in a chair, bed, or other piece of furniture or equipment; changing and adjusting positions; moving to or from a sitting position; turning side-to-side; assisting the member to sit upright.

- **Transferring:** moving from one surface to another with or without a sliding board; moving from bed, chair, wheelchair, or vehicle to a new surface; moving to or from a standing or sitting position; moving the member with lift devices.

**13.10 Instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs) are activities that include:**

- **Telephone use or other communication:** assisting the member in making or receiving telephone calls; managing and setting up communication devices; making and receiving the call for the member.

- **Grocery or household shopping:** shopping for or assisting members in shopping for grocery and household items; preparing a shopping list; putting food and household items away; picking up medication and supplies.

- **Light housework:** performing or assisting the member in performing light housework such as: cleaning and putting away dishes; wiping countertops; dusting; sweeping, vacuuming or mopping; changing linens and making bed; cleaning bathroom; taking out trash.

- **Laundry:** assisting the member with doing laundry; gathering, sorting, washing, drying, folding, and putting away personal laundry, bedding, and towels; removing bedding to be washed and remaking the bed; using a laundry facility.

- **Meal preparation:** assisting members in preparing meals and snacks; cooking; assembling ingredients; cutting, chopping, grinding, or pureeing food; setting out food and utensils; serving food; preparing and pouring a predetermined
amount of liquid nutrition; cleaning the feeding tube; cleaning area after meal; washing dishes.

- Money management: assisting the member with managing their day-to-day finances; paying bills; balancing checkbook; making deposits or withdrawals; assisting in preparing and adhering to a budget.

14. Occupational therapy services are considered NOT medically necessary if any of the following is determined:

14.1 Therapy services that are provided after the member has reached the maximum level of improvement or is now functioning with normal limits.

14.2 The therapy is not aimed at improving, adapting or restoring functions, which have been impaired or permanently lost as a result of illness, injury, loss of a body part, or congenital abnormality.

14.3 The therapy is not aimed at developing, improving or maintaining functions, which would normally develop.

14.4 The therapy is for conditions for which therapy would be considered routine educationally-based (i.e., via school systems) or involved routine education, training, conditioning, or fitness. This includes treatments or activities that require only routine supervision.

14.5 The expectation does not exist that the therapy will result in a practical improvement in the level of functioning within a reasonable and predictable period of time.

14.6 If function could reasonably be expected to improve as the member gradually resumes normal activities.

14.7 If a member's expected restoration potential would be insignificant in relation to the extent and duration of the therapy service required to achieve such potential.

14.8 The therapy documentation fails to objectively verify functional progress over a reasonable period of time.

14.9 The physical modalities are not preparatory to other skilled treatment procedures.

14.10 Treatments that do not generally require the skills of a qualified provider of OT services including:

- general range of motion or exercise programs
- massage
- repetitive gait
- maintenance therapy
- activities that a member can self-practice independently or with a caregiver
- swimming and routine water aerobics programs
14.11 Treatments that are not supported in peer-reviewed literature including, but not limited to:

- investigational treatments such as sensory integration (with the exception of cognitive rehabilitation for member's with traumatic brain injury due to illness or injury who are able to actively participate in the treatment program)
- vestibular rehabilitation for the treatment of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
- anodyne therapy
- craniosacral therapy
- interactive metronome therapy
- cranial electro stimulation
- the Wilbarger brushing protocol
- low-energy neuro-feedback
- Treatment for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).
- Adjunctive therapy for behavioral diagnoses or as an adjunct to psychotherapy.
- Learning skills which should be remediated in the classroom environment including handwriting, cutting, or other subjects which are part of a school curriculum.

14.12 Services are duplicative. When members receive physical, occupational, or speech therapy, the therapists should provide different treatments that reflect each therapy discipline's unique perspective on the member's impairments and functional deficits and not duplicate the same treatment. They must also have separate evaluations, treatment plans, and goals.

14.13 Repetitive therapy services that are designed to maintain function once the maximum level of improvement has been reached

14.14 Therapy not expected to result in practical functional improvements in the member's level of functioning.

14.15 Therapy services provided by a licensed therapist who is the member's responsible adult (e.g., biological, adoptive, or foster parents, guardians, court-appointed managing conservators, other family members by birth or marriage).

15. Special documentation considerations:
15.1 Requests for co-treatment services will follow current guidance in the Texas Medicaid Provider Procedures Manual, Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, and Speech Therapy Services Handbook, section 4.4 Co-Treatment

15.2 Change of therapy provider documentation. If a provider or member discontinues therapy during an existing prior authorized period and the member requests services through a new provider, outside the current group or agency, the provider must start a new request for authorization and submit all of the following:

15.2.1 A change-of-therapy provider letter
15.2.2 Signature of the member or responsible adult
15.2.3 The date that the member ended therapy (effective date of change) with the previous provider or last date of service
15.2.4 The name of the new provider and previous provider

15.2.5 When a provider or member discontinues therapy during an existing prior authorization period and the member requests services through a new provider located within the same enrolled group of providers or within a group of independently enrolled providers collaboratively working together, the new provider can use the same evaluation and plan of care. Therefore, the authorization period will not change.

15.3 Change of coverage/Continuity of Care:

15.3.1 When services were not prior authorized by Texas Children’s Health Plan, (through another MCO or TMHP) the authorization request must include a copy of the previously approved authorization letter

15.3.2 The services will be honored for the shorter of 90 days or until expiration of the authorization letter.

15.3.3 If an in-network provider submits all documentation required by TCHP for the service requested and it meets medical necessity criteria outlined in this guideline, TCHP will honor the authorization request for the duration of the original authorization even if it extends past 90 days.

15.3.4 The request will not be considered retrospective if submitted within the same month of the enrollment date.

15.3.5 If a request to transfer an authorization is submitted after the end date of the previous authorization, it will have to meet all of the documentation requirements and submission guidelines for the specific service type.

15.4 Coordination of care with PPECC:

15.4.1 When the member receives therapy services in a PPECC setting, the therapy provider must provide evidence of care coordination with the prescribed pediatric extended care center (PPECC) provider.

16. The following services are excluded from coverage and NOT a benefit:
16.1 Occupational Therapy for chronic medical conditions for members who are 21 years of age and older

16.2 Therapy services provided by a licensed therapist who is the member’s responsible adult (e.g., biological, adoptive, or foster parents, guardians, court-appointed managing conservators, other family members by birth or marriage)

16.3 Equipment and supplies used during therapy visits are not reimbursed separately; they are considered part of the therapy services provided

17. Providers should bill for therapy services in accordance with guidance in the current Texas Medicaid Provider Procedures Manual.

18. All requests for occupational therapy evaluations and treatment that do not meet the guidelines referenced here will be referred to a TCHP Medical Director/Physician Reviewer for review and the Denial Policy will be followed.

19. Preauthorization is based on medical necessity and not a guarantee of benefits or eligibility. Even if preauthorization is approved for treatment or a particular service, that authorization applies only to the medical necessity of treatment or service. All services are subject to benefit limitations and exclusions. Providers are subject to State and Federal Regulatory compliance and failure to comply may result in retrospective audit and potential financial recoupment.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

**Tests used must be norm-referenced, standardized, age appropriate and specific to the suspected area(s) of deficit. The following list of tests is not all-inclusive. (Newer editions of currently listed tests are also acceptable.)

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<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Adaptive Behavior Scale — School Edition</td>
<td>ABS-S</td>
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<td>Ashworth Scale</td>
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<td>Box &amp; Block Test of Manual Dexterity</td>
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<td>Bruininks-Oseretksky Test of Motor Proficiency</td>
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<td>Cognitive Performance Test</td>
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<td>DeGangi-Berk Test of Sensory Integration</td>
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<td>Developmental Test of Visual Motor Integration</td>
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<td>Test</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developmental Test of Visual Perception, Second Edition</td>
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<td>Evaluation Tool of Children’s Handwriting</td>
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<td>Functional Independence Measure — young version</td>
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<td>Functional Independence Measure — 7 years of age to adult</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pediatric Evaluation of Disability Inventory</td>
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<td>NOTE: The PEDI can also be used for older children whose</td>
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<td>functional abilities fall below that expected of a 7 ½ year old</td>
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<td>with no disabilities. In this case, the scaled score is the</td>
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<td>most appropriate score to consider.</td>
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<td>Purdue Pegboard Test</td>
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REFERENCES:

Government Agency and Medical Society Other Publications:


Peer Reviewed Publications:


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<td>6/08/2023</td>
<td>Clinical &amp; Administrative Advisory Committee Reviewed and Approved for Implementation</td>
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