

Provider Bulletin

Ordering Providers Guide to Radiology Pre-Authorization Program

Effective April 1, 2009

National Imaging Associations, Inc. (NIA) will allow the ordering or delivering physician to get prior authorization for the services/procedures in the Radiology Program. We designed this guide to assist the delivering provider in getting prior authorization for NIA. On behalf of BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina, NIA handles preauthorization for certain imaging services. NIA is an independent company.

Services/Procedures Included in the Radiology Program*

- Computerized Axial Tomography (CAT) Scan
- Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)
- Positron Emission Tomography (PET)
- Magnetic Resonance Angiography (MRA)

*Non-emergency outpatient diagnostic imaging services performed in a freestanding imaging center, hospital outpatient setting or in-office via physician-owned high tech equipment preauthorization.

Who is Included in the Radiology Program?

Providers can determine which BlueCross members are part of groups requiring radiology pre-certification through the Eligibility and Benefits tab in My Insurance ManagerSM at www.SouthCarolinaBlues.com, or by calling Provider Services at 1-800-868-2510.

Preauthorization Request

There are two ways to request preauthorization: Web or phone.

How to Complete a Web Preauthorization Request

To complete a Web preauthorization request you will need to get your own unique user name and password for each individual user in your office. Simply visit www.SouthCarolinaBlues.com and follow the link to www.RadMD.com. Click on the New User button and complete the application form. If your request for authorization is pended, you will receive a tracking number and NIA will contact you to complete the process.

How to Complete a Phone Preauthorization Request

You can get a prior authorization by calling 1-866-500-7664. (The rendering facilities should conduct studies physicians order after normal business hours or on weekends as the ordering physician requests. The ordering physician, however, must contact NIA within 24 hours or the next business day to get proper authorization for the studies, which will still be subject to medical necessity review.)

NIA call center hours of operation are Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. EST.

Required Information

NIA will need the following information for every preauthorization request (please have the patient's chart or office notes available to expedite the process):

- Name and office phone number of ordering physician.
- Member's name and ID number.
- Requested examination.
- Name of provider's office or facility where the service will be performed.
- Anticipated date of service (if known).
- Details justifying examination:
 - Symptoms and their duration.
 - Physical exam findings.
 - Conservative treatment patient has already completed (e.g. physical therapy, chiropractic or osteopathic manipulation, hot pads, massage, ice packs, medications).
 - Preliminary procedures already completed (e.g. X-rays, CTs, lab work, ultrasound, scoped procedures, referrals to specialist, specialist's evaluation).
- Reason the study is being requested (e.g. further evaluation, rule out a disorder).
- Please be prepared to fax the following information, if requested:
 - Clinical notes.
 - X-ray reports.
 - Previous CT/MRI reports.
 - Specialist reports/evaluation.
 - Ultrasound reports.

Important Notes:

- If the authorization is not given during the initial intake process (level 1), the case will be forwarded to NIA's clinical departments which will review the clinical information you submitted. If needed, the clinical staff will request, via fax, additional clinical information. You can fax this information to NIA's dedicated clinical fax line. An ordering office might request a hot transfer to a nurse clinical reviewer (level 2) during the initial request, however, you should only request this if your office has a clinician who can speak with NIA's nurses and who has additional clinical information that would support the requested study.
- If authorization is still pending at the end of the initial call, it is not necessary for the ordering physician's office to remain on the line. If the authorization request still does not meet clinical criteria at the nurse review level, it will be escalated to physician review (level 3). At that point, the NIA physician may ask for more clinical information or request to have a peer discussion with the ordering physician.
- Prior authorization is not required for emergency room, observation and inpatient imaging.
- A complete list of CPT-4 codes that NIA authorizes on behalf of BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina can be found in the provider section of www.SouthCarolinaBlues.com under Resources.
- You can find NIA's Guidelines for Clinical Use of Diagnostic Imaging Examinations on NIA's Web site at www.RadMD.com. They are in a PDF file that you can print for future reference. NIA developed its clinical guidelines from practice experiences, literature reviews, specialty criteria sets and empirical data.

Reminders

When scheduling an appointment, please ask the ordering provider if a preauthorization has been approved before scheduling the patient's imaging procedure. If your facility performs the test and a preauthorization has not been approved, you will not be reimbursed for the service.