

215 ILCS 134/40(b) Access to Specialists

Sec. 40. Access to specialists.

(a) All health care plans that require each enrollee to select a health care provider for any purpose including coordination of care shall permit an enrollee to choose any available primary care physician licensed to practice medicine in all its branches participating in the health care plan for that purpose. The health care plan shall provide the enrollee with a choice of licensed health care providers who are accessible and qualified. Nothing in this Act shall be construed to prohibit a health care plan from requiring a health care provider to meet the health care plan's criteria in order to coordinate access to health care.

(b) A health care plan shall establish a procedure by which an enrollee who has a condition that requires ongoing care from a specialist physician or other health care provider may apply for a standing referral to a specialist physician or other health care provider if a referral to a specialist physician or other health care provider is required for coverage. The application shall be made to the enrollee's primary care physician. This procedure for a standing referral must specify the necessary criteria and conditions that must be met in order for an enrollee to obtain a standing referral. A standing referral shall be effective for the period necessary to provide the referred services or one year, except in the event of termination of a contract or policy in which case Section 25 on transition of services shall apply, if applicable. A primary care physician may renew and re-renew a standing referral.

(c) The enrollee may be required by the health care plan to select a specialist physician or other health care provider who has a referral arrangement with the enrollee's primary care physician or to select a new primary care physician who has a referral arrangement with the specialist physician or other health care provider chosen by the enrollee. If a health care plan requires an enrollee to select a new physician under this subsection, the health care plan must provide the enrollee with both options provided in this subsection. When a participating specialist with a referral arrangement is not available, the primary care physician, in consultation with the enrollee, shall arrange for the enrollee to have access to a qualified participating health care provider, and the enrollee shall be allowed to stay with his or her primary care physician. If a secondary referral is necessary, the specialist physician or other health care provider shall advise the primary care physician. The primary care physician shall be responsible for making the secondary referral. In addition, the health care plan shall require the specialist physician or other health care provider to provide regular updates to the enrollee's primary care physician.

(d) When the type of specialist physician or other health care provider needed to provide ongoing care for a specific condition is not represented in the health care plan's provider network, the primary care physician shall arrange for the enrollee to have access to a qualified non-participating health care provider within a reasonable distance and travel time at no additional cost beyond what the enrollee would otherwise pay for services received within the network. The referring physician shall notify the plan when a referral is made outside the network.

(e) The enrollee's primary care physician shall remain responsible for coordinating the care of an enrollee who has received a standing referral to a specialist physician or other health care provider. If a secondary referral is necessary, the specialist physician or other health care provider shall advise the primary care physician. The primary care physician shall be responsible for making the secondary referral. In addition, the health care plan shall require the specialist physician or other health care provider to provide regular updates to the enrollee's primary care physician.

(f) If an enrollee's application for any referral is denied, an enrollee may appeal the decision through the health care plan's external independent review process in accordance with subsection (f) of Section 45 of this Act.

(g) Nothing in this Act shall be construed to require an enrollee to select a new primary care physician when no referral arrangement exists between the enrollee's primary care physician and the specialist

selected by the enrollee and when the enrollee has a long-standing relationship with his or her primary care physician.

(h) In promulgating rules to implement this Act, the Department shall define "standing referral" and "ongoing course of treatment".

(Source: P.A. 91-617, eff. 1-1-00.)