



How to get specialty care and referrals

If you need care your PCP cannot give you, he or she will refer you to a specialist who can. If your PCP refers you to another doctor, we will pay for your care. Most of these specialists are Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield (Highmark BCBS) providers. Talk with your PCP to make sure you know how referrals work.

If you think a specialist does not meet your needs, talk to your PCP. Your PCP can help you if you need to see a different specialist.

There are some treatments and services that your PCP must ask Highmark BCBS to approve before you can get them. Your PCP will be able to tell you what they are.

If you're having trouble getting a referral you think you need, contact Member Services at **1-866-231-0847 (TTY 711)**. If we do not have a specialist in our provider network who can give you the care you need, we will get you the care you need from a specialist outside our plan. This is called an out-of-network referral. Your PCP or plan provider must ask Highmark BCBS for approval before you can get an out-of-network referral. If your PCP or plan provider refers you to a provider who is not in our network, you are not responsible for any of the costs except any copays as described in your member handbook.

Your PCP can obtain a preauthorization for services with out-of-network providers by calling **1-866-231-0847 (TTY 711)**. Sometimes we may not approve an out-of-network referral because we have a provider in Highmark BCBS who can treat you. If you think our plan provider does not have the right training or experience to treat you, you can ask us to check if your out-of-network referral is medically needed. You will need to ask for an action appeal.

In this case, you will need to ask your doctor to send a statement in writing with your action appeal that:

1. Says a Highmark BCBS provider does not have the right training and experience to meet your needs.
2. Recommends an out-of-network provider with the right training and experience who is able to treat you.

Your doctor must be a board-certified or board-eligible specialist who treats people needing the treatment you're asking for.

Sometimes, we may not approve an out-of-network referral for a specific treatment. This is because you asked for care that isn't very different from what you can get from a Highmark BCBS provider. You can ask us to check if your out-of-network referral for the treatment you want is medically needed. You will need to ask for an **action appeal**.

In this case, you will need to ask your doctor to send these two pieces of information with your action appeal:

1. A statement in writing from your doctor that the out-of-network treatment is very different from the treatment you can get from the Highmark BCBS provider. Your doctor must be a board-certified or board-eligible specialist who treats people who need the treatment you are asking for.
2. Two medical or scientific documents that prove the treatment you're asking for is more helpful to you and will not cause you more harm than the treatment you can get from a Highmark BCBS provider.

If your doctor does not send this information, we will still review your action appeal. However, you may not be eligible for an external appeal.

If you need to see a specialist for ongoing care, your PCP may be able to refer you for a specified number of visits or length of time (a **standing referral**). If you have a standing referral, you will not need a new referral for each time you need care.

If you have a long-term disease or a disabling illness that gets worse over time, your PCP may be able to arrange for:

- Your specialist to act as your PCP.
- A referral to a specialty care center that deals with the treatment of your illness.

You can also call Member Services at **1-866-231-0847 (TTY 711)** for help in getting access to a specialty care center.

www.bcbswny.com/stateplans

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