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## Clinical Practice Guidelines Updates

ASH clinical practice guidelines (CPGs) exist to provide a framework for decision making and operational processes within the organization. These important documents are consistently developed, revised, and inactivated/terminated as dictated by accreditation and certification standards, regulatory requirements, delegation requirements, peer-practitioner committee feedback, and business needs. In addition, CPGs are reviewed for current supporting literature, as well as new information, in peer-reviewed literature and technology advancement. CPGs are reviewed and updated annually, along with any other time it is necessary throughout the year.

From September 2022 through October 2022, 27 existing CPGs were presented for review and approval.

Three of the CPGs had changes which were material in nature.

<b>Upper Extremity Orthoses</b>	CPG	161
<b>Pediatric Intensive Feeding Programs</b>	CPG	271
<b>Knee Orthoses</b>	CPG	281

One new CPG was developed and approved during this timeframe. The new CPG is listed below for your reference:

- Fall Prevention Program (CPG 306)

CPGs may be found posted on our website at:

<https://www.ashlink.com/ASH/public/Providers/COM/techniqueprocedurecpgs.aspx>

Health care practitioners should practice only in the areas in which they are competent based on their education, training, and experience. Levels of education, experience, and proficiency may vary among individual practitioners. It is ethically and legally incumbent on a practitioner to determine where they have the knowledge and skills necessary to perform such services, and whether the services are within their scope of practice.

We value your input. For comments or questions on ASH Clinical Practice Guidelines, please contact us at [ClinicalQualityAdministration@ashn.com](mailto:ClinicalQualityAdministration@ashn.com) or call Practitioner Contract Services at 800.972.4226, option 4.



# Pain Management Across Cultures

ASH is pleased to announce another installment of information from the Health Industry Collaboration Effort (HICE) Provider Tools to Care for Diverse Populations. This selection focuses on tips for pain management across cultures. More Details and resources can be found at:

[https://www.iceforhealth.org/library/documents/Better\\_Communication,\\_Better\\_Care\\_-\\_Provider\\_Tools\\_to\\_Care\\_for\\_Diverse\\_Populations.pdf](https://www.iceforhealth.org/library/documents/Better_Communication,_Better_Care_-_Provider_Tools_to_Care_for_Diverse_Populations.pdf)  
HICE originally published this article in 2016; updated in 2020.

## Provider Tools – Pain Management Across Cultures

People from different cultures experience pain in various ways. Your ability to provide adequate pain management to patients may be improved when you have a better understanding of these cultural differences. There are several areas of cultural variation to consider:

### Reaction to pain and expression of pain

- Cultures vary in what are considered acceptable expressions of pain. Expression of pain may vary from stoic to extremely expressive, for the same level of pain, in different cultures.
- Just because a patient doesn't exhibit verbal or facial expressions of pain, doesn't mean they are not experiencing pain.
- Avoid judgment about the way someone is expressing their pain, even if it doesn't fit your expectations or experiences. The way a person in pain behaves is socially learned.

### Spiritual and religious beliefs about using pain medication

- Members of certain faiths may not take pain relief medications on religious fasting days.
- Spiritual or religious traditions may affect a patient's preference for the form of medication delivery.
- If you are not a prescribing provider, coordinating with the prescribing health care practitioner about a patient's personal beliefs could help optimize recovery.
- Accommodating religious preferences, when possible, will improve the effectiveness of the pain relief treatment. Be sure to ask about these influences when discussing treatment plans.

### Genetics and pain management

- In addition to culture and beliefs, genes may affect how pain is perceived. Research has shown that people from different genetic backgrounds react to pain medication differently. Family history may contain information about specific pain medication effects in a patient. The tendency to experience medication use issues may also be genetically influenced.
- If you are not the prescriber, encourage and empower your patient to discuss concerns about addiction and prevention with their prescribing health care practitioner.

### Use of various pain relief treatments

- Your patient may be using a wide range of pain relief treatments, such as herbal compresses or teas, massage, meditation, acupuncture, or other pain management methods specific to their culture or religious beliefs.
- Respectfully inquire about all the ways the patient is treating their pain. What methods are they using, how did they choose that method, and how has it been working for them?
- Use indirect questions about community or family traditions for pain management to obtain hints about what the patient may be using.

### Methods needed to assess pain

- Most patients can describe their pain using a progressive scale, but others are not comfortable using a numeric scale. In these situations, a facial expression (smile to grimace) may be more useful.
- Ask the patient specifically how they can best describe their pain.
- Use multiple methods for assessing pain if the assessment of pain is producing an ambiguous picture.
- Using a picture of the front and back of the body the patient can fill in is useful to facilitate the discussion around pain and determine the location of the pain, especially if the pain is in multiple locations.
- Consider using measures of how the patient can function to gauge how pain is interfering with a person's daily life.
- Ask about how their pain is impacting or affecting their usual daily activities, and if it is preventing them from being as active as they usually are or would like to be.

We hope the series is providing useful tips and reminders to help effectively communicate with, and understand, your diverse patient population.

# ASH Medical Necessity Review NCQA Affirmative Statement About Incentives

In accordance with NCQA standards for Medical Necessity Review, ASH and our affiliates distribute a statement to all our contracted and credentialed practitioners, providers, and staff who make medical necessity review decisions affirming that:

1. Medical Necessity Review (MNR) decision-making is based only on appropriateness of care and service, as well as existence of coverage.
2. ASH does not specifically reward providers or other individuals for issuing denials of coverage or care.
3. Financial incentives for MNR decision-makers do not encourage decisions that result in underutilization.
4. ASH does not make decisions regarding hiring, promoting, or terminating providers or other individuals based upon the likelihood or perceived likelihood that the individual will support, or tend to support, the denial of benefits.
5. Providers are ensured independence and impartiality in making referral decisions that will not influence:
  - Hiring
  - Termination
  - Any other similar matters
  - Compensation
  - Promotion

ASH Clinical Quality Evaluators are not permitted to interfere with the referral process as it relates to patient care.

ASH and our affiliates facilitate the delivery of appropriate, evidence-based, clinical care to our members. We also monitor our clinical performance program to detect and correct potential under or over-utilization of services.

ASH staff is available at least 8 hours a day during normal business hours for toll-free calls regarding utilization management issues. ASH providers can contact ASH at 800.972.4226. Members can contact ASH regarding any utilization management concerns at 800.678.9133.

## Nondiscrimination Provision of the Affordable Care Act (Section 1557)

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) requires providers who see patients in government programs like Medicare and Medicaid (as well as other programs that receive HHS funding) to follow the rules laid out by Section 1557. It is unlawful for ASH contracted practitioners/providers to discriminate or deny services to members based on race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability in health programs or activities. As a reminder, protections under Section 1557 include men and women being treated equally in the health care they receive.

Additionally, accommodations must also be made for members with a disability, to prevent any barriers to receiving care. Ensuring physical facilities are accessible and readily making alternative means of communication or providing auxiliary aids, are some steps to take in this regard. Section 1557 also requires your office to take the necessary steps to ensure effective communication for individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP). Posting signage about interpretation options and readily arranging interpretation services, are helpful steps in satisfying your requirements.

In fact, interpretation services must be arranged in a timely manner. Where appropriate, telephonic interpretation services are available by calling ASH Customer Service at 1.800.678-9133. ASH Customer Service will conference in a qualified interpreter from ASH's contracted language interpreter service to provide interpretation services between you and the member. Section 1557 helps prevent discrimination in health care. We hope this reminder will help you adopt the new standards to fully implement Section 1557.

### Key Requirements:

- Not to discriminate based on race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability in providing your services
- Post notices of nondiscrimination and taglines that alert individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP) to the availability of language assistance services
- Assist individuals with LEP by offering language assistance services. For ASH members, this process involves:
  1. Arranging interpretation services appropriately ahead of time. Telephonic interpretation services are available by calling ASH Customer Service at 1.800.678-9133.
  2. Customer Service will conference in a qualified interpreter from ASH's contracted language interpreter service to provide interpretation services between you and the member.
- Make sure all electronic patient programs and activities allow for people with disabilities to access them
- All newly constructed or altered provider facilities must be physically accessible for individuals with disabilities
- Provide proper auxiliary aids and services for individuals with disabilities, to enable access to programs and services your office offers

These are some of the key requirements of Section 1557. For more information you can visit:

<https://www.hhs.gov/civil-rights/for-individuals/section-1557/index.html>

## Client List Review Reminder

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Be sure to review the *ASH Attachment D – Client Summaries of your Provider Services Agreement* regularly for a complete list of the health plan clients contracted with ASH in your state and specialty. Reviewing this list regularly will help to avoid the possibility of turning away members who are eligible for your services. The *Attachment D – Client Summaries* include a complete list of all current health plans contracted with ASH, along with individual client summaries and fee schedules for each. Individual client summaries include details regarding fee schedule amounts, referral requirements, medical necessity review requirements, and other unique health plan requirements. New health plan clients are added throughout the year with notices released announcing each one.

The *Attachment D – Client Summaries* can be found on the ASHLink website, ASH's secure provider portal, under the Resources tab, by selecting Client Summaries.

If you have not activated your ASHLink account yet and would like to, please contact ASH Customer Service at 800.972.4226, option 2 for help. The ASHLink website is a convenient way to access the most current versions of all your ASH materials.

## Have you activated your ASHLink account?

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The ASHLink website, ASH's secure provider portal, can help save you time and money with electronic transactions and instant access to the most current versions of all your ASH resources.

On the ASHLink website you can:

- Verify member eligibility and benefits instantly
- Submit medical necessity review information
- Submit claims
- Reference clinical practice guidelines
- Access the most current versions of your ASH materials including agreements, client summaries & fee schedules, program manuals, and forms
- Receive notifications and newsletters directly to your own ASHLink inbox
- Access a comprehensive educational library of information about working within the ASH system
- Create sub-accounts for your office staff to conduct transactions on your behalf

Additionally, you can receive incentive payments for conducting your daily transactions electronically via the ASHLink website. The more you transact via the ASHLink website, the more incentives you are eligible to receive.

Save yourself and your office time and money. If you aren't currently taking advantage of all the great benefits the ASHLink website has to offer, there is no better time to start than right now! For information on how to activate your account, set up sub-accounts, or to simply request a step-by-step ASHLink website orientation, please contact ASH Customer Service at 800.972.4226, option 2 for help.

## Supplier Diversity Program: Diversity Classifications

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Diversity is a vital component of the communities we serve, which is why we feel our provider networks should reflect that diversity to the members it serves.

ASH's Supplier Diversity program began as a way to recognize business ownership as a key factor in social and financial security, as well as that minorities and women are underrepresented among business ownership. Recently, the program has evolved to more closely reflect the broad diversity of our local communities, and to become more inclusive with the variety of locally-relevant businesses that encounter obstacles in areas like market entry, customer access, and financial growth. This not only includes small businesses, but also those businesses owned and operated by **minorities, women, veterans, and LGBTQ individuals to name a few.**

Your participation in the ASH Supplier Diversity program can help you represent the diversity of our provider network and better serve our members with access and availability to a diverse network of providers that serve the needs and preferences within their community. Being part of the Supplier Diversity program also allows ASH to recognize you in the provider directory as a Supplier Diversity program participant, allowing members to have that information when choosing their service provider.

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ASH's Supplier Diversity program recognizes these diverse-owned business classifications. To become part of the ASH Supplier Diversity program, you must be registered with one of the organizations listed below. To learn more about these important organizations and how to register with them, please visit their websites directly.

**Minority-Owned:** At least 51% of the business is owned and operated by one or more members of a disadvantaged minority group. These groups include African American, Asian Pacific American, Hispanic American, Native American, or Subcontinent Asian American.

National Minority Supplier Development Council: <https://nmsdc.org/>

**Woman-Owned:** At least 51% of the business is owned and operated by a woman.

Women's Business Enterprise National Council: <https://www.wbenc.org/>

**Veteran-Owned:** At least 51% of the business is owned and operated by one or more veterans.

Veteran: a person who has served in active military service.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs: <https://www.va.gov/osdbu/>

**Small Business:** Size determined by NAICS Code found on the SBA's website.

U.S. Small Business Administration: [www.sba.gov/size](http://www.sba.gov/size)

**Small Disadvantaged Business:** Must meet small business criteria based on NAICS code and be at least 51% owned and operated by members of a socially and economically disadvantaged group.

U.S. Small Business Administration: <https://www.sba.gov/federal-contracting/contracting-assistance-programs/8a-business-development-program>

**HUBZone Small Certified:** A business operating in a designated historically underutilized business zone and certified by the SBA.

U.S. Small Business Administration: <https://www.sba.gov/federal-contracting/contracting-assistance-programs/hubzone-program>

**Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small:** At least 51% of the business is owned and operated by one or more service-disabled veterans and must meet small business criteria based on NAICS code.

U.S. Small Business Administration: Veteran Assistance Programs:

<https://www.sba.gov/federal-contracting/contracting-assistance-programs/veteran-assistance-programs>

**Woman-Owned Small:** At least 51% of the business is owned and operated by women and must meet small business criteria based on NAICS code.

Women's Business Enterprise National Council: <https://www.wbenc.org/>

**National LGBTQ Chamber of Commerce:** Businesses that are at least 51% owned/controlled by lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender individuals of U.S. Citizenship.

National LGBTQ Chamber of Commerce: <http://nglcc.org/>

*Note: Ownership refers to legal ownership of the organization. Operation refers to control and management of day-to-day business operations.*

**Would you like to be part of the ASH Supplier Diversity Program?** If so, please follow these two easy steps:

1. Ensure your company is certified/registered with one of the supplier diversity categories listed above. You can do so directly via the websites listed above.

2. Register with ASH's Supplier Diversity Program via the ASHLink website, ASH's secure provider portal, and send a copy of your certification to [PSCR@ashn.com](mailto:PSCR@ashn.com).

Providers must be certified/registered with one of the supplier diversity categories listed above prior to registering with the ASH Supplier Diversity program via the ASHLink website.

For more information regarding our Supplier Diversity program, please contact the Provider Contracting Services department at 800.972.4226, option 4.



## Update Your Information Online

Have your office hours changed? Has your address changed? Have you added or removed email addresses, fax numbers or phone numbers? Does your office offer home-based care or telehealth services? Have you been certified as a Diverse Supplier? All this important information can be quickly and easily updated directly through the ASHLink website, American Specialty Health's (ASH's) secure provider portal, just by logging in and selecting *Account > Confirm / Update Your Information*.

As a contracted provider with ASH, you must provide written notice to ASH at least 30 days prior to a change. This allows ASH time to ensure our systems are updated and that health plan clients have been notified of the new information within the established timeframes. Any delay in notifying ASH of some of these types of changes could result in claims processing issues or customer service issues for members.

To avoid missing important updates, changes, or health plan announcements, please be sure to review your information regularly and update it as often as needed.

If you have any questions regarding this process, or for help completing the Provider Status Change Request form, please contact Provider Contract Services at 800.972.4226, option 4. Our agents are available to assist you Monday through Friday from 8 am to 5 pm Pacific Time.

## Validating Your Provider Data with ASH & NPPES

ASH is required to validate your information on a quarterly basis for auditing and compliance purposes. This regulation requires an affirmative response from providers that their information is current and accurate. For compliance with this and to avoid any possible delays in payments or reimbursements, it is important to ensure you are verifying and validating your information quarterly, as required. This is easily done via the ASHLink website, ASH's secure provider portal, under *Account > Confirm/Update Your Information*.

Additionally, please remember to regularly verify and update your information in the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' National Plan & Provider Enumeration System. ASH has the ability to use the NPPES to compare data to help ensure the most accurate provider data is always being displayed for the members who are searching for it. Keeping your information up to date will not only aid in improving provider directory accuracy, but we hope it will also start to limit the outreach to your office in search of this information. For more information on validating your information with NPPES, visit <https://nppes.cms.hhs.gov/#/>.

