

# **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

## **Qualifying for Service**

### **WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR PRC SERVICES?**

- Alaska Native/American Indian who meets SEARHC's eligibility policy requirements
- Alaska Native/American Indian who has been Alaska residents for the prior 180 days and who intends to remain in Alaska
- Non-Indian women who are pregnant with an eligible Alaska Native/American Indian child or the mother of an Alaska Native/American Indian child up to six weeks postpartum
- Children of an eligible Alaska Native or American Indian, including non-Indian foster children, adopted children, stepchildren, legal wards or orphans until they reach the age of 19

### **WHAT IS NOT COVERED BY PRC?**

- Medical services provided by a non-tribal facility or provider that has not been authorized by PRC
- Medical services provided by a non-SEARHC health care provider that have not been referred by a SEARHC physician and authorized by PRC
- Obstetric deliveries at non-tribal hospitals, unless due to a life-threatening emergency
- Inpatient or outpatient mental health services
- Inpatient or outpatient substance abuse treatment programs
- Medical care considered investigational or experimental
- Nursing home or long-term care facilities
- Routine dental services
- PRC will not authorize payment for a non-tribal facility if a tribal health facility was open and available to provide the needed care

This is not an all-inclusive list. Please contact PRC if you have any questions

### **HOW DO I START THE PROCESS TO TRAVEL FOR HEALTHCARE?**

- A SEARHC physician must initiate all referrals for medical care
- A referral does not authorize payment. When the patient is referred outside of SEARHC, PRC must approve medical care.

### **WHAT IS THE REFERRAL PROCESS?**

- A SEARHC physician must initiate all referrals for medical care
- The patient must have eligibility on file at SEARHC
- Patients will be required to apply for Medicaid if they are eligible. If the patient does not complete the Medicaid application process, payment for routine medical services and travel may be denied by PRC

### **WHY DO I NEED A REFERRAL?**

If it is not an emergency, authorization is required before treatment begins for SEARHC to cover the cost of outside medical care. If you make appointments without consulting a SEARHC provider and PRC, we may not be able to help cover your costs.

### **CAN I GO TO ANY MEDICAL FACILITY OF MY CHOICE?**

IHS facilities must be utilized instead of private facilities, if available.

### **I'VE RECEIVED AN APPOINTMENT LETTER. WHAT SHOULD I DO TO ENSURE THAT MY TRAVEL IS DONE PROMPTLY?**

If you get an appointment letter or phone call with notice of appointments, please call your clinic to see if they received notification of your appointments. If not, you may want to bring it in or fax it to your local clinic.

### **I KNOW I HAVE APPOINTMENTS WHY DO I NEED AN APPOINTMENT LETTER?**

An appointment letter confirms that a referral was made, the referring provider, and which provider outside of SEARHC you will be visiting. The lack of an appointment letter will slow the processing of your request. If you arranged for healthcare outside of the SEARHC system yourself, without appropriate referral and/or authorization, then your travel may not be covered.

### **DO I HAVE TO APPLY FOR ALTERNATE RESOURCES?**

Patients who receive PRC funding are required to make a good faith effort to apply for alternate resources, such as Medicaid or Medicare before PRC funding can be utilized, as SEARHC is the payor of last resort under federal regulation 42 CFR 36.61. Failure to make a good faith effort in completing the application process will make you financially responsible for all medical fees incurred outside of SEARHC.

### **CAN SEARHC HELP ME APPLY FOR ALTERNATE FUNDING?**

Yes. SEARHC registration staff located in any SEARHC facility will be happy to help you apply for appropriate alternate resources.

### **WHY DO I NEED TO APPLY FOR MEDICAID IF I AM A BENEFICIARY?**

SEARHC is the payer of last resort, so if you are eligible, you must apply for

Medicaid. SEARHC can only authorize PRC funding after applying for Medicaid.

**MEDICAID WANTS ME TO FLY TO AND FROM MY APPOINTMENT ON THE SAME DAY I HAVE MY APPOINTMENT. CAN I CHANGE THIS?**

If Medicaid can arrange travel to and from your appointments on the same day, they will. If you ask to stay longer, a letter of medical necessity must be obtained and reviewed.

**WHAT IS A LETTER OF MEDICAL NECESSITY AND WHY IS MEDICAID ASKING FOR IT?**

A letter of medical necessity is a letter from your provider explaining any special circumstances you may have. If our travel office asks Medicaid to pay for you to travel a day early or with an escort, Medicaid may require this document.

**HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO COMPLETE MEDICAID TRAVEL?**

On average Medicaid, travel takes a few hours to complete. If a letter of medical necessity is required, it could take several days. As soon as your medical appointments are scheduled, contact your local Medicaid travel office so the process can be started.

**HOW CAN I BE COVERED FOR EMERGENCY CARE WHILE I AM OUTSIDE OF ALASKA?**

- You must notify PRC within 72 hours after you begin medical treatment, including weekends and holidays (please leave a message if necessary), at (866)966-8316.

If you are 65 or older or are disabled, you have 30 days to contact PRC

If you are unable to, a relative, friend or health care provider can notify PRC on your behalf.

Notifying SEARHC is ultimately your responsibility

- Medical emergency coverage is provided for:

Vacationers

People moving outside of Alaska (180 days maximum)

In the event of a medical emergency, PRC may require proof of when you left Alaska. This proof could be dated airline tickets, airline boarding passes, ferry tickets or gas receipts if you drove to your destination. For individuals moving outside of Alaska, you should register with the closest Indian Health Service or tribal health facility if available.

**I HAD TO GO TO THE DOCTOR WHILE I WAS ON VACATION. HOW DO I GET THESE BILLS PAID?**

You have 72 hours from the time services were rendered to notify PRC. All claims will be reviewed though payment is not guaranteed. If you are over 65 or disabled, you have 30 days to report services.

**CAN I HAVE SEARHC COVER MEDICAL SERVICES IN METLAKATLA OR KETCHIKAN?**

Residents of Ketchikan or Metlakatla should have Ketchikan Indian Corporation or the Annette Island Service Unit (Metlakatla) cover their services. The patient should always ask questions as these PRC programs may have different rules.

Most IHS facilities begin coverage after 180 days in the state of Alaska, but both Metlakatla and Ketchikan specifically require you to live in their service area for 180 days.

**I RECEIVED MEDICAL CARE IN METLAKATLA OR KETCHIKAN AND GOT A BILL. DOES SEARHC PAY FOR THIS?**

No, if one IHS facility denies a bill, another cannot make payment, so it is always best to call your local PRC office before you receive services. Otherwise, you may be responsible for the bill.