

EXPEDITED & URGENT REFERRAL HANDLING

REFERRALS

Referrals are requests for additional care, usually of a specialty nature, by a primary care provider or by a specialist needing additional medical information on behalf of the patient.

Handling of Referrals

Referrals are generally handled as one of three categories: **emergency/emergent**, **urgent** and **routine**.

Project Access Northwest cannot accept referrals marked EMERGENT or EMERGENCY or URGENT. They will be returned.

Emergency/emergent referrals (per MAA) are for services provided for care required after the sudden onset of a medical condition manifesting itself by acute symptoms of sufficient severity (including severe pain) such that the absence of immediate medical attention could reasonably be expected to result in:

- Placing the client's health in serious jeopardy;
- Serious impairment to bodily functions; or
- Serious dysfunction of any bodily organ or part.

Primary care patients meeting this criteria should be referred to the closest emergency room or, if the patient is in a primary care clinic, 911 should be called.

Urgent referrals are for services the patient needs quickly. Project Access Northwest cannot accept referrals marked URGENT.

*NOTE: Providers should not request urgent referrals for patients "wanting" expedited care. Providers should not request urgent referrals because they want their referrals processed more quickly. Please see **Handling Expedited Referrals** below.*

Project Access Northwest can handle ROUTINE or NON-URGENT referrals. Often the referral cannot be processed until the patient completes needed financial information as many specialty care provider groups request patient financial information accompany the referral when the patient has no insurance. Project Access Northwest cannot process a referral and send along for specialty care unless the patient is currently enrolled in Project Access Northwest and any needed specialty requirements such as labs, imaging, and/or specific office visits notes are included.

Expedited Referrals

Expedited (quick) referrals tell Project Access Northwest that the primary care provider wants the referral handled outside of the routine Project Access Northwest process. Project Access Northwest will honor this request but still requires:

- **The patient to be enrolled in Project Access Northwest** so enrollment information is needed if the patient is not currently enrolled.
- **The reason the referral needs to be expedited.** (This should be included in the referral so the specialist has this information as well.)
- **Any labs, OV notes or current imaging** helpful to the specialist.

Project Access Northwest will then alert the RNs that an expedited referral is in the To Be Processed folder. RNs then review the referral, approve or pend, notify/email the care coordinator and enter in Track Via once a case is created.

When a referral is expedited, RNs and care coordinators set aside work they are doing on other referrals to address the expedited referral.