Professional Credentialing and Recredentialing

**Purpose**

After meeting contractual requirements and prior to executing and issuing a contractual agreement, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (BCBSMA*) credentials all primary care providers (PCPs), specialty care physicians (SCPs), and licensed clinicians who have applied for enrollment in our credentialed networks (Managed Care and/or PPO).

It is important to note that a provider’s ability to bill and be paid for services provided to BCBSMA members at a participating level does not begin until a BCBSMA signed and executed Agreement is returned to the provider. BCBSMA will send a welcome letter to the provider stating they have successfully completed the credentialing process; effective date of network participation and confirming the networks in which the provider is participating.

**Streamlining the Re/Credentialing Process**

Healthcare Administrative Solutions, Inc. (HCAS) coordinates the credentialing application process and primary source verification for providers participating with or applying to participate with BCBSMA and other HCAS-participating health plans. HCAS provides a single point of credentialing data entry that is shared by all HCAS-participating health plans. The HCAS participating plans add the provider to the Council for Affordable Quality Healthcare (CAQH) roster, once this is done a provider is able to register with CAQH and submit credentialing information with supporting documentation to CAQH. The Credentialing Verification Organization (CVO) verifies this information, and then passes it to BCBSMA for further review and final determination.

- If you are not yet registered with CAQH, please log on to the CAQH website, utilizing your CAQH ID number or contact them at 1-888-599-1771 to begin the process. Before completing the CAQH process, be sure to authorize BCBSMA to view the information you have submitted.
- If you have already registered with CAQH, please be sure to retest every 120 days to the correctness of the information submitted and update all necessary information, including credentialing contact information and the current expiration dates of your license, federal DEA number, malpractice insurance, board certifications, hospital affiliations, and certificates, to ensure the timely processing of your recredentialing application.

Please access these links for help getting started with the credentialing process or for further information about the organizations involved:

- The HCAS Credentialing Process
- HCAS
- CAQH

**Application**

Each applicant to BCBSMA’s credentialed networks must either submit a complete credentialing application, or complete a CAQH online application including all requested documentation, and an attestation to the correctness and completeness of the application. For more information on how to complete the application, follow the HCAS link above and select the “Credentialing Resources” tab to view the HCAS Credentialing Training Manual.

Please be sure to submit an updated attestation and release of information form along with your completed application and supporting documentation. This attestation should be submitted for both initial credentialing and recredentialing. A blank release can be found in Section III (pages 10 and 11) of the *Integrated Massachusetts Application for Initial Credentialing/Appointment*.

The completed release form can be faxed to CAQH along with all other supporting documentation. Supplying CAQH with a current attestation and release of information (signed and dated no earlier than 180 days prior to re/credentialing) will aid in the timely processing of your re/credentialing application. After initial credentialing, the recredentialing cycle is initiated every two years based on the provider’s birth month and year.
Professional Credentialing and Recredentialing (cont.)

The following information will be required of each applicant:

**Admitting Arrangements**
Physicians (as required by specialty), surgical podiatrists, nurse practitioner primary care providers (NPPCPs), and physician assistant primary care providers (PAPCPs) are required to have clinical privileges at a BCBSMA-participating hospital. BCBSMA requires and verifies that an applicant’s clinical and admitting privileges are in good standing and that he/she is credentialed by the hospital pursuant to Chapter 243, Section 3.05 of the Code of Massachusetts Regulations (243 CMR 3.05). If the clinical privileges do not include admitting privileges, the applicant must supply the name of the BCBSMA contracted/credentialed clinician(s) or hospitalist program who will be admitting for the applicant.

If the applicant does not have hospital privileges, then admittance to BCBSMA credentialed networks occurs on an exception case-basis only. Applicants approved as an exception must provide evidence of an alternative admitting arrangement with a BCBSMA-credentialed provider. Oral and maxillofacial surgeons applying for participation in a BCBSMA medical plan are required to hold clinical and admitting privileges at a BCBSMA-participating hospital.

**Licensure**
All applicants are required to hold a valid license in their field of practice issued by the state in which they will be treating BCBSMA members.

**Medical Malpractice Insurance**
All applicants must maintain professional liability insurance in the minimum of $1 million per occurrence/$3 million in the aggregate.

**Board Certification**
**EFFECTIVE 11/01/2013**

A physician (MD, DO), or oral and maxillofacial surgeon (DDS/DMD, MD/DDS or DMD) who are applying for participation in Blue Cross credentialed provider medical networks in a specific specialty must be currently board certified by a recognized board or agency (see below) or must meet the current training requirements for board certification.

Recognized Boards include:
- American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS)
- American Osteopathic Association (AOA)
- American Board of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery (ABOMS)

Podiatrists (DPM) must be board certified.
- American Board of Podiatric Medicine (ABPM)
- American Board of Podiatric Surgery (ABPS)
- American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons (ACFAS)

Dentists and Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons that participate only in the Blue Cross credentialed provider dental networks are not required to have board certification.

**Controlled Substance Certificates**
**EFFECTIVE 11/01/2013**

BCBSMA prefers practitioners with legal authority to prescribe medications to hold an appropriate, current and valid United States Department of Justice Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Certificate of Registration in good standing and Massachusetts Controlled Substances Registration (MCSR).

Non-prescribing practitioners who have prescriptive authority may be credentialed without a DEA. In these cases the applicant must submit a signed and dated waiver that includes an explanation why the applicant does not prescribe and provides the name of the BCBSMA credentialed, participating practitioner who will write prescriptions for medications.

Please note: NPPCPs and PAPCPs are contractually required to maintain a current and valid DEA.
- DEA Waiver form
Professional Credentialing and Recredentialing (cont.)

24-hour Provider Coverage
To ensure continuity of patient care Physicians, Surgical Podiatrists, Nurse Practitioners, Nurse Practitioner Primary Care Providers, Physician Assistants Primary Care Providers and Behavioral Health Practitioners are required to have 24 hour coverage with a Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Blue Cross credentialed covering practitioner/provider.

Other
In addition to the information above, initial applicants are required to submit the following:
- Professional education and the highest level of training
- A five-year work history, or
- A copy of their current Curriculum Vitae

Ongoing Monitoring
BCBSMA may conduct an office site visit for reasons, such as, but not limited to, when made aware of any inadequacies pertaining to physical accessibility, physical appearance, adequacy of waiting and examining room space, availability of appointments, and/or adequacy of treatment record keeping. BCBSMA will take into account the severity of the issue in determining the need for a site visit.

BCBSMA queries the National Practitioner Data Bank (NPDB), reviews reports from Medicare, licensing boards, and other entities for evidence of malpractice settlements, state sanctions, and license limitations as part of the re/credentialing process.

Credentialing Committee Review
BCBSMA’s Corporate Credentialing staff will review all re/credentialing applications for completeness. Completed applications are then forwarded to the Credentialing Committee for approval or denial. The Credentialing Committee reserves the right to decredential at any time a provider who does not meet BCBSMA’s standards and/or criteria for re/credentialing.

An applicant will be notified of the Committee’s initial credentialing decision or of a non-approval decision to recredential within four (4) business days of that decision. An applicant may request, in writing, reconsideration of any decision by the Credentialing Committee to deny or terminate him/her from BCBSMA’s credentialed networks. The request must be received by BCBSMA within thirty (30) days of notification of the denial.

Providers’ Rights
All information submitted to BCBSMA as part of the re/credentialing process will be maintained as confidential, subject to, and in accordance with legal restrictions. An applicant has the right to review information obtained by BCBSMA for the purposes of re/credentialing, including outside sources such as malpractice carriers, insurance carriers, state licensing boards, an AMA profile, and NPDB reports. Information obtained by BCBSMA for purposes other than re/credentialing or which is prohibited from disclosure by law is not included. An applicant may address any inconsistencies between information they provided and information obtained by BCBSMA. An applicant has the right to request, in writing or via telephone, the status of his/her application(s). BCBSMA does not make credentialing decisions based on a providers’ race, ethnic/national identity, gender, age, or sexual orientation. BCBSMA reserves the right to review and update our re/credentialing policies periodically.