

WAC 284-170-380 Standards for temporary substitution of contracted network providers—"Locum tenens" providers. It is a longstanding and widespread practice for contracted network providers to retain substitute providers to take over their professional practices when the contracted network providers are absent for reasons such as illness, pregnancy, vacation, or continuing medical education, and for contracted network providers to bill and receive payment for the substitute providers' services as though they were provided by the contracted network provider. The contracted network provider generally pays the substitute provider based on an agreement between the contracted network provider and the substitute provider, and the substitute provider has the status of an independent contractor rather than an employee of the contracted network provider. These substitute providers are commonly called "locum tenens" providers.

In order to protect patients and ensure that they benefit from seamless quality care when contractual network providers are away from their practices, and that patients receive quality care from qualified substitute providers, carriers may require substitute providers to provide the information required in subsection (1) of this section.

The following are minimum standards for temporary provider substitution and do not prevent a carrier from entering into other agreed arrangements with its contracted network providers for terms that are less restrictive or more favorable to providers.

Carriers must permit the following categories of contracted network provider to arrange for temporary substitution by a substitute provider: Doctor of medicine, doctor of osteopathic medicine, doctor of dental surgery or dental medicine, doctor of chiropractic, podiatric physician and surgeon, doctor of optometry, doctor of naturopathic medicine and advanced registered nurse practitioner.

(1) At the time of substitution, the substitute provider:

(a) Must have a current Washington license and be legally authorized to practice in this state;

(b) Must provide services under the same scope of practice as the contracted network provider;

(c) Must not be suspended or excluded from any state or federal health care program;

(d) Must have professional liability insurance coverage; and

(e) Must have a current drug enforcement certificate, if applicable.

(2)(a) Carriers must allow a contracted network provider to arrange for a substitute provider for at least sixty days during any calendar year.

(b) A carrier must grant an extension if a contracted network provider demonstrates that exceptional circumstances require additional time away from his or her practice.

(3) A carrier may require that the contracted network provider agree to bill for services rendered by the substitute provider using the carrier's billing guidelines, including use of HIPAA compliant code sets, commonly known as the Q-6 modifier, or any other code or modifier that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) adopts in the future.

(4) Nothing in this section is intended to prevent the carrier from requiring:

(a) That the contracted network provider require acceptance by the substitute provider of the carrier's fee schedule; or

(b) Acceptance by the substitute provider of the carrier's usual and customary charge as payment in full.

(5) This rule does not apply to Medicare Advantage or other health plans administered by the federal government that require pre-credentialing of all providers.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 48.02.060. WSR 16-07-144 (Matter No. R 2016-01), recodified as § 284-170-380, filed 3/23/16, effective 4/23/16. WSR 16-01-081, recodified as § 284-43-9985, filed 12/14/15, effective 12/14/15. Statutory Authority: RCW 48.02.060 and 48.43.515. WSR 08-01-025 (Matter No. R 2005-04), § 284-43-260, filed 12/10/07, effective 1/10/08.]