

# 2022 Bariatric Surgery

Coverage Announcements Summary

Month/Day/Year



## Medically Supervised Weight Loss (MSWL) Requirements (1 of 2)

# Bariatric Surgery Coverage Announcements

The following health plans within North America have changed their medical policy for Bariatric Surgery

Reported Date	Plan	Covered Lives	Geography	Effective	Policy	Details
11/4/2021	Pacific Source	213,000	OR & ID	7/1/2021	<a href="#">link</a>	Removed criteria: Authorization for surgery: Documentation of ongoing active participation in a structured, medically-supervised, non- surgical weight loss program for a minimum of 6 months with the past 24 months as described in the completed in the pre-surgical evaluation phase
8/4/2021	Medical Mutual	1,075,412	OH	6/28/21	<a href="#">link</a>	Removed: 3 months of participation in a Weight Watcher® program within 24 months preceding the request for bariatric surgery (with >/ 3 visits to physician or certified nurse practitioner to document weight during that period) satisfies this requirement.
7/6/2021	Excellus BCBS	1,168,679	NY	5/21/2021	<a href="#">link</a>	Removed medically necessary criteria for History of rigorous attempts at weight reduction stated: At least one program must have been a supervised weight loss program; 2. Weight loss attempts need not be continuous, but a minimum total of six months is required. a. If the patient has had no previous attempts at medical weight loss, participation for a minimum of six months in a pre-operative bariatric surgery weight loss program is required. b. If past prior attempts at weight loss are remote (greater than five years), then the patient is required to participate, for a minimum of six months, in a pre-operative bariatric surgery weight loss program. Replaced medical policy language includes the following: <b>C. History of rigorous attempts at weight reduction: 1. There must be written evidence of a weight loss history, either by the bariatric surgeon, primary care physician or nutritionist. This documentation should include the name of the weight loss program, length of participation in the program, and any weight loss achieved. Continued participation in weight loss programs should be encouraged pre-operatively. 2. A clinical evaluation by a Registered Dietician pre-operatively is mandatory, and documentation must be included.</b>
7/6/2021	BCBS Michigan	5,160,366	MI	7/01/2021	<a href="#">link</a>	Old language from 2020 policy:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The patient has been clinically evaluated by an MD or DO (or their authorized delegate (e.g., physician assistant, etc.). The physician has documented failure of non-surgical management including a structured, professionally supervised (physician or non-physician) weight loss program for a minimum of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Six full, consecutive months (180 days) within the last four years prior to the recommendation for bariatric surgery (for BCBSM patients) OR</li> <li>- Six full, consecutive months (180 days) within the last two years prior to the recommendation for bariatric surgery (for BCN patients).</li> <li>- The six full consecutive month (180 days) weight loss program listed above is waived for super morbidly obese individuals who have a BMI ≥50. Documentation should include periodic weights, dietary therapy and physical exercise, as well as behavioral therapy, counseling and pharmacotherapy, as indicated.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Documentation that the PCP and the patient have a good understanding of the risks involved and reasonable expectations that the patient will be compliant with all post-surgical requirements.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o The patient has undergone multidisciplinary evaluation by an established bariatric treatment program to include medical, nutritional and mental health evaluations to determine ultimate candidacy for bariatric surgery. Such an evaluation should include an assessment of the patient's likely ability and willingness to cooperate effectively with a rigorous post-operative program. This should include documentation of past participation in</li> </ul>

## Medically Supervised Weight Loss (MSWL) Requirements (2 of 2)

# Bariatric Surgery Coverage Announcements

The following health plans within North America have changed their medical policy for Bariatric Surgery

Reported Date	Plan	Covered Lives	Geography	Effective	Policy	Details
6-2-2021	Asuris Northwest Health, Bridgespan Health, and Regence BlueCross BlueShield	1,855,587	OR, UT, ID, WA	May 2021	<a href="#">link</a>	Documentation of active participation for a total of at least 3 consecutive months in a structured, medically supervised pre-operative training program. The program must be provided by or approved and monitored under the supervision of the bariatric program. (Removed: <b>Comprehensive weight loss programs generally address diet, exercise, and behavior modification [e.g. Weight Watcher]</b> ) Documentation from the clinical medical records must indicate that the structured medical supervision meets all of the following Criteria: a. Program participation occurs during a total of at least 3 consecutive months within the 12 months prior to the request for surgery; and b. Include at least 2 visits for medical supervision, during the 3 consecutive months of program participation. One visit must occur at the initiation, and another at least 3 months later (90 days); and c. Be provided by an MD, DO, NP, PA, or RD in conjunction with the bariatric program; and d. Include assessment and counseling concerning weight, nutrition and diet that should be related to the type planned bariatric surgery, exercise, and behavior modification
6-2-2021	Premera Blue Cross and LifeWise Health	2,143,847	WA, AK	May 2021	<a href="#">link</a>	Participation in a physician administered <b>weight reduction program lasting at least three continuous months within the 12 month period before surgery is considered.</b> o Evidence of active participation documented in the medical record includes: § Weight § Current dietary program (eg, MediFast, OptiFast) § Physical activity (eg, exercise/work-out program) OR • Documentation of participation in a structured weight reduction program such as as Weight Watchers or Jenny Craig is an acceptable alternative if done in conjunction with physician supervision
5-5-2021	BCBS Massachusetts	1,657,901	Massachusetts	April 2021	<a href="#">link</a>	Adults over the age of 18 or who have documented complete bone growth are eligible for obesity surgery if ALL of the following criteria are met: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The physician has indicated that the patient: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Is a well informed and motivated patient with acceptable operative risks, AND</li> <li>o Has a strong desire for substantial weight loss, AND</li> <li>o <b>Has failed other non-surgical approaches to long-term weight loss. These approaches (i.e. diet and exercise plans, behavioral changes, etc.) and duration are up to the surgeon's discretion, AND</b></li> <li>o Is enrolled in a program which provides pre-op and post-op multidisciplinary evaluation and care including behavioral health, nutrition, and medical management AND</li> <li>• The patient is morbidly obese with a BMI &gt; 40kg/m².</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
5-5-2021	GEHA	N/A Federal Retirees	National	April 2021	<a href="#">link</a>	When bariatric weight loss surgery is covered: To be eligible for coverage of any primary bariatric procedure, the individual must show documentation of: A. Psychological clearance of the member's ability to understand and adhere to pre- and postoperative program based on a psychological assessment performed by a licensed professional mental health practitioner; and B. Documentation that the member has been nicotine free the six months prior to surgery; and C. Member has not been treated for substance/alcohol use for one year prior to surgery and there is no evidence of substance use or harmful/hazardous drinking within the one-year period prior to surgery; and D. <b>Participation and compliance in a medically supervised preoperative weight loss program</b>
3-3-2021	WellFirst Health	5,726	MO	Feb 2021	<a href="#">link</a>	There is a confirmed failure of a medically supervised multifaceted weight loss program including consultation with a dietician and/or pharmacologic interventions when medically appropriate of at least five (5) months duration: 2.3.1 Medical supervision must be provided by a comprehensive weight loss management program; 2.3.2 <b>Participation must be for a total of five (5) months or longer in duration and occur within two (2) years prior to surgery;</b> 2.3.3 Member's participation must be documented in the medical record by an attending provider who supervised the member's participation; (NOTE: a physician summary letter is not sufficient documentation. Documentation should include medical records of contemporaneous assessment of patient's progress throughout the course of the nutrition and exercise program.)
3-3-2021	Dean Health Plan	190,168	WI	Feb 2021	<a href="#">link</a>	There is a confirmed failure of a medically supervised multifaceted weight loss program including consultation with a dietician and pharmacologic interventions when medically appropriate of at least five (5) months duration: 2.3.1 Medical supervision must be provided by a comprehensive weight loss management program; 2.3.2 <b>Participation must be for a total of five (5) months or longer in duration and occur within two (2) years prior to surgery;</b> 2.3.3 Member's participation must be documented in the medical record by an attending provider who supervised the member's participation; (NOTE: a physician summary letter is not sufficient documentation. Documentation should include medical records of contemporaneous assessment of patient's progress throughout the course of the nutrition and exercise program.)

## Comorbidities

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1-5-22	Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina	2,239,860	NC	12/2021	<a href="#">link</a>	Added: I. Nonalcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH)
11-4-2021	Lifewise	43,000	WA	10-1-2021	<a href="#">link</a>	Revised criteria: Obstructive sleep apnea, as documented by a sleep study (polysomnography), that is uncontrolled by medical management (eg, CPAP or oral appliance).
10-6-21	Upper Peninsula Health	55,493	MI	9-8-21	<a href="#">link</a>	Changed Comorbidities: Member has a body mass index greater than 35 with life threatening comorbidities including, but not limited to: Diabetes mellitus OR Symptomatic sleep apnea (removed not controlled by C-Pap) OR Severe cardiopulmonary condition OR Hypertension (removed inadequately controlled with optimal conventional treatment) OR Uncontrolled hyperlipidemia (removed not amendable to optimal conventional treatment)
5-5-2021	OSU Health Plan	57,000	OSU (Ohio)	Feb 2021	<a href="#">link</a>	OSU Health Plan considers weight loss surgery (i.e., gastric bypass, gastric banding, gastric reduction) medically necessary when all the following criteria are met: • Member meets one of the following BMI requirements and has been at that BMI for a minimum of 2 years: o BMI over 40 o BMI over 35 with one or more severe obesity-related comorbidities: § Type II Diabetes Mellitus § Clinically significant obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) documented on polysomnogram § Medically refractory hypertension with systolic over 140 and/or diastolic over 90 despite concurrent use of 3 anti-hypertensive agents of different classes § Documentation of any life threatening or serious medical condition that is directly weight related
4-7-2021	Wisconsin Physician Services (includes Arise Health Plan & Aspirus Health Plan)	105,476	WI	Feb 2021	<a href="#">link</a>	Age 18 or older with a BMI of 35 or greater AND one (1) of the following comorbid conditions: 1. Coronary artery disease with evidence of previous coronary artery bypass graft (CABG), or percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI), or obesity-related cardiomyopathy 2. Diabetes Mellitus 3. Hypertension (high blood pressure) that is difficult to control (defined as hypertensive despite a maximum dose of 3 antihypertensive agents) while compliant with medical therapy 4. Sleep apnea that requires Positive Airway Pressure (PAP) treatment (e.g. Obstructive Sleep Apnea or Obesity Hypoventilation Syndrome diagnosed by a sleep medicine specialist) 5. Pseudotumor cerebri 6. Degenerative joint disease with prior total joint replacement or documentation of need for joint replacement 7. Metabolic syndrome 8. Gastro-Esophageal Reflux Disease (GERD) 9. Nonalcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH) and doesn't meet weight loss goals in 6 months
3-3-2021	Humana	6,294,265	National	Jan 2021	<a href="#">link</a>	Added additional comorbidities for initial bariatric procedures for members 18 years or older and adolescents with BMI greater than 35: Evidence of fatty liver disease (eg, nonalcoholic fatty liver disease [NAFLD], nonalcoholic steatohepatitis [NASH]) Revised comorbidity for initial bariatric procedures for members 18 years or older with BMI greater than 35: For uncontrolled hypertension, specified that this is an example of cardiovascular disease, and added hyperlipidemia as an additional example of cardiovascular disease.
1-29-2021	Coordinated Care	79,000	WA	Nov 2020	<a href="#">link</a>	Added the following co-morbidity: Coronary Artery Disease
9-1-2021	Providence Health Plan	394,512	OR, WA	8/1/2021	<a href="#">link</a>	Added following comorbidity: Non-alcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH) BMI at the start of the bariatric surgery program is between 35.0-39.9 kg/m2 and the patient has any of the following (a.-e.) comorbid conditions: a. Type II diabetes mellitus; or b. Hypertension which has not responded to optimal medical management; or c. Life-threatening cardio-pulmonary disease (severe obstructive sleep apnea [defined as an AHI or RDI ≥ 30], obesity hypoventilation syndrome) which has not responded to optimal medical management; or d. Non-alcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH); or e. Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) which has not responded to optimal medical management and Nissen fundoplication is contraindicated (Note: The presence of gastroesophageal reflux (GERD) or other condition does not negate the requirement for pre-surgical evaluation)...



