

Quality of Care Standards for Argus Members

Argus Dental & Vision, Inc. (the Plan) strives to provide excellent service to our members and network providers. Therefore, Argus adopts standards for care and services that are implemented throughout the scope of the organization. These standards of care are based on principles of professional practice and ethical conduct in healthcare. Our standards intend to maintain a system that provides quality services to our members. Argus monitors the quality of care and service provided by the Plan and its network providers. These are Argus Dental & Vision, Inc.'s expectations in the provision of quality of care standards.

1. Professionals

- a. Professionals have necessary and appropriate training and skills for the services they are approved and credentialed by the Plan to provide (refer to Credentialing Policies).
- b. Health care professionals practice in an ethical and legal manner, consistent with professionally recognized standards of health care. Each is qualified to perform the services they render.
- c. Professionals maintain their required continuing education requirements as established by their licensing and certification boards.
- d. Many of our providers refer to others within our network. If a professional is providing treatment not in accordance with accepted standards of care to a member(s), concerns are to be reported to Argus to initiate further investigation.
- e. Health care professionals and staff resources are sufficient for the volume and scope of care and services provided.
- f. Anesthesia is provided only by health care professionals who have been credentialed and granted clinical privileges to render this service.
- g. Surgical and related services are performed in a safe and sanitary environment by qualified health care professionals who have been granted privileges to perform those procedures by Argus.
- h. Professionals are required to have procedures in place that protect patient personal health information (PHI) in accordance with HIPAA privacy and HITECH standards.
- i. Professionals perform proper medical record documentation of patient care, including the completeness, continuity and coordination of care. Medical records are to be maintained in a manner that is current, detailed and organized while maintaining confidentiality of the patient's care.
- j. Professionals/Providers will cooperate with the timely provision of medical records when requested by Argus. Copies of requested records are to be furnished for monitoring activities by Argus (that include but are limited) to improve quality, utilization management and maintain patient safety.
- k. Professionals are to cooperate with Argus' procedures for handling grievances, appeals and expedited appeals, if indicated. This includes the timely provision of requested medical records for standard and expedited appeals.

2. Health Care

- a. Health care is provided consistent with current standards of care.
- b. Patients are encouraged to participate in their provision of care.
- c. Patients are educated about methods and benefits of preventative care and encouraged to be proactive in their health. This includes the importance of receiving appropriate screenings and preventive services, such as dental cleanings.
- d. Patients receive effective communication and education regarding their diagnosis, treatment, preventive measures and use of the health system. The patient's reaction to this information is documented in their working chart.
- e. Diagnoses are timely, appropriate, and based on findings of current history and physical examination.
- f. Medications are updated, reconciled and documented at each interaction. Medication review includes over-the-counter and those used in complementary and alternative medicine (CAM).
- g. Treatment is provided based on clinical impressions or working diagnoses. The care provided is medically necessary and appropriate
- h. The necessity or appropriateness of the proposed procedure(s), as well as alternative treatments and the order of care, have been discussed with the patient prior to the delivery of services. The provider makes notation of this discussion, modifications to plan as a result of this discussion and the member's agreement to the finalized plan of care.
- i. The provider obtains the appropriate signed forms of consent for any procedures, as indicated. These signed consent forms are maintained in the patient's chart.
- j. Consultations and referrals are appropriate and timely.
- k. Patients are contacted in as timely a manner as possible for follow-up of significant problems or abnormal findings.
- l. Imaging services provided or made available meet the needs of the patient and are provided in accordance with ethical and professional practices and legal requirements.
- m. The provider develops policies and procedures related to the identification, treatment and management of pain.
- n. The provider establishes procedures to obtain, identify, store and transport laboratory specimens or biological products.

3. Patient Satisfaction

- a. Health care services are provided in a manner to facilitate patient satisfaction.
- b. Health care providers monitor and act on any expressions of dissatisfaction made by patients.
- c. The Plan supports and addresses any incidents and patterns of dissatisfaction, based on patient satisfaction identified at a plan or provider level.

4. Cost of Care

- a. Health care services are provided in a cost-effective manner.
- b. Pre-authorization is obtained for applicable services.

- c. Concern for the costs of care is demonstrated by the following:
 - The relevance of services to the needs of the patients.
 - The absence of duplicative diagnostic procedures.
 - The appropriateness of treatment frequency.
 - The use of the least expensive alternate resources when suitable.
 - The use of ancillary services consistent with patients' needs.
 - The products that the provider makes available for sale to patients must be done in an ethical manner.

5. Access and Availability

- a. Services are accessible to patients at a level that meets their health care requirements.
- b. Services are provided to patients in a culturally competent manner which takes into account limited English proficiency or reading skills, hearing or vision impairment and cultural and ethnic backgrounds.
- c. Patients receive information about the Plan's and health care provider's hours of operation and the method for accessing services after hours, on weekends and holidays.
- d. Adequate information is provided in a timely manner when patient care is transferred to another health care professional.
- e. When the need arises, reasonable attempts are made for professionals and other staff to communicate in the language or manner primarily used by patients.
- f. Imaging services provided or made available meet the needs of the patient and are provided in accordance with ethical and professional practices and legal requirements.

6. Continuity of Care

- a. The Plan assists with the referral and transfer of patients to other specialty or health care providers as needed.
- b. Specialty services are available and sufficient for the population served.
- c. Referrals to specialty or health services are communicated clearly to the patient and arranged and accepted by the receiving provider.
- d. The referring provider will make record of the specialty referral and the resulting care received.
- e. Accommodations for a responsible adult to transport patients when sedation is administered are confirmed prior to the date of planned procedure. The provider documents that the responsible adult was present and assumed care once the patient was released by the provider.
- f. Patients are fully educated regarding any self-care required post-procedure/surgery. Providers are to document the education provided and that the patient was able to demonstrate comprehension of instructions (teach-back method).

- g. Providers will perform appropriate follow-up monitoring and care of patients when indicated and in a timely manner.

7. Acute and Emergency Services

- a. The Plan maintains a plan for managing acute and emergency care situations which require hospitalization through credentialed providers or written agreements for admitting privileges.
- b. Acute and emergency procedures are handled according to a written medical emergency plan.
- c. The provider maintains an adverse incident reporting system which includes notifying Argus of the occurrence of a critical or adverse incident via the Argus form and Argus reporting system.
- d. The provider's office maintains the appropriate emergency services equipment and medications should an emergency arise. The provider ensures the equipment is operating within standards and that emergency bag medications are within expiration dates.
- e. Provider and staff will hold indicated emergency health care certifications, such as Basic Life Support and CPR to ensure patient safety.