

Right of First Refusal

Did your network provider send you to a specialty and then the referral was redirected to the Military Treatment Facility?

As a patient, there are a few elements about referrals that are beneficial to understand.

The referral is a contact between your doctor and a specialty provider. At GLWACH your doctor will enter a referral into your electronic medical record. A determination is made whether your service can be provided at the Military Treatment Facility (MTF) or deferred to the network before forwarding to TriWest. If your primary care provider is not at GLWACH, a TriWest referral form is sent directly to TriWest for authorization.

If you live in the Tricare Prime Service area, the MTF is your first option for all health care services. If a civilian provider submits a request on your behalf, you may be referred instead to the MTF. If this has ever happened to you, it may be very confusing and frustrating to you and your family. Knowing why this happens and how the process works can make a world of difference.

The MTF has the right of first refusal (ROFR) for any services requested by a civilian provider, if the services are available at the MTF. If a TRICARE beneficiary living near an MTF is referred for specialty care by a civilian provider and the service is available at the MTF, the MTF may decide to provide the care. If services are refused by the MTF, the referral will be allowed with a network provider.

If you are referred to the MTF, the specialty clinic or TriWest Service Center will contact you to make an appointment. If your referral is forwarded to the network you will receive a letter from TriWest indicating where you are authorized to go and a way to contact the provider and make an appointment. An authorization is TriWest's agreement to pay the specialty provider for the services listed on the authorization letter. A provider may request to perform additional services upon approval by contacting TriWest.

It is recommended that if you live near a MTF that you verify that you are authorized to see the provider you were referred to. This can be done by accessing Tricare Online (www.triwest.com) or waiting for your referral authorization letter. You may also notice that the specialist your doctor requested is replaced with another specialist. TriWest only refers to TriWest network providers. This ensures that you are not stuck with excessive costs. It is always important to make sure you have authorization prior to going to an appointment as TriWest cannot backdate referrals to cover a previous appointment.

Tricare Online is a great tool for checking your referral authorizations, what services are being allowed and when the referral expires. You have the option of going paperless which saves you time and ensures that your letters are not being lost or delayed in the postal system. You can also use Tricare Online to schedule appointments at the Military Treatment Facility.

Once you return from your specialty appointment don't forget to bring your prescriptions to the GLWACH pharmacy or PX pharmacy to be filled. There are no co-pays at the MTF for any services which will save you money.

If you are having an emergency seek care at the nearest emergency room and report the episode to TriWest within 24 hours. For out of area urgent care needs contact your primary care provider for a referral.

Please refer to your Tricare handbook for additional information.