

PCP:	Page 1 of 2
SECTION: Office Management	
POLICY AND PROCEDURE: Triage	Approved date: _____ Approved by: _____ Effective date: _____ Revised date: _____ Revised date: _____

POLICY:

The site shall have sufficient health care personnel to provide timely, appropriate health care services. Triage is the sorting and classification of information to determine priority of need and proper place of treatment. Telephone triage is the system for managing telephone callers during and after office hours.

PROCEDURE:

- A. The PCP will ensure that appropriate personnel handle emergent, urgent and medical advice telephone calls. This includes licensed medical personnel such as a CNM, NP, RN or PA. LVN's cannot perform triage independently (MCPB letter 92-15). LVNs and unlicensed personnel such as medical assistants may provide patient information or instructions only as authorized by the physician (Title 16, 1366b)

- B. Staff will ensure that a telephone answering machine, voice mail system or answering service is utilized whenever office staff does not directly answer phone calls.

The practitioner is responsible for the answering service it uses. If a member calls after hours or on a weekend for a possible medical emergency, the practitioner is held liable for authorization of or referral to, emergency care given by the answering service. There must be a message immediately stating, "If this is an emergency, hang up and call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room."

➤ ***This message should be in the threshold languages for the office.***

- Answering service staff handling member calls cannot provide telephone medical advice if they are not a licensed, certified or registered health care professional. Staff members may ask questions on behalf of a licensed professional in order to help ascertain the condition of the member so that the member can be referred to licensed staff; however, they are not permitted, under any circumstance, to use the answers to questions in an attempt to assess, evaluate, advise, or make any decision

POLICY AND PROCEDURE: Triage

regarding the condition of the member, or to determine when a member needs to be seen by a licensed medical professional. Unlicensed telephone staff should have clear instructions on the parameters relating to the use of answers in assisting a licensed provider.

- C. Staff will ensure that the telephone answering service, recorded telephone information, and recording devices are periodically checked and updated (see suggested scripts as seen in section 18 of this manual).
- Health Plans encourage answering services follow these steps when receiving a call:
 - Inform the member that if they are experiencing a medical emergency, they should hang up and call 911 or proceed to the nearest emergency medical facility.
 - Question the member according to the PCP's or PPG's established instructions (who, what, when, and where) to assess the nature and extent of the problem.
 - Contact the on-call physician with the facts as stated by the member.
 - After office hours, physicians are required to return telephone calls and pages within 30 minutes. If an on-call physician cannot be reached, direct the member to a medical facility where emergency or urgent care treatment can be given. This is considered authorization, which is binding and cannot be retracted