



Effective: 1/1/2011, 2/2012; 6/2012

Reviewed/Revised: 2/2013; 4/2013; 11/2013, 01/22/2014;
03/31/2014; 02/24/15; 05/11/15; 10/15/15; 12/11/15;
02/11/15; 02/11/16; 5/12/16; 8/11/16; 2/9/17; 8/10/17;
2/8/18; 2/16/18; 2/23/18; 2/28/18; 5/10/18; 8/9/18; 11/8/18;
1/3/19; 11/12/19; 2/13/20; 5/14/20, 2/11/21, 2/17/22;
11/10/22, 2/2/23, 2/8/24

DIRECT SPECIALTY REFERRAL

Purpose: The purpose of the expansion of the direct specialty referral for **VCHCP** members is to facilitate member referrals from contracted providers to contracted specialists for consultation, follow up visits and subsequent in office and non-in office procedures and diagnostic testing. A specific referral process and referral form has been developed and provided to primary care providers for use in making direct referrals.

Policy: The direct specialty referral allows contracted Primary Care Physicians to directly refer members to certain contracted specialty providers for an initial consult and appropriate follow up visits without requiring a Treatment Authorization Request (TAR) submission and prior authorization from the Health Plan. Additionally, specialists can perform certain procedures during the initial consultation and follow up visits without prior authorization from the Health Plan. Previously, requests for additional visits beyond two (2) follow up visits either from the Primary Care Physician or from the Specialist required prior authorization. However, now, any follow up visits will not require prior authorization as long as the member has seen the specialist within a rolling year and the visit is for the original problem. If the member has not seen the specialist for a year, or if the member requires a consultation for a new problem, a new direct specialty referral form will be required from the primary care physician. Any associated procedures not listed below will continue to require prior authorization as they did previously.

In addition, urgent care and Emergency Room (ER) physicians may now directly refer members to Orthopedics and Cardiology specialty for urgently required consultation.

Neurologists can directly refer to Pain Management Specialists, Physiatrists [Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Specialist (PM&R)] and Orthopedics. Pain Management Specialists and Physiatrists (PM&R) can directly refer to Orthopedics. Pain Management Specialists and Physiatrists (PM&R) can refer back and forth based on the type of referral and access.

Neurosurgery can directly refer to Pain Management Specialists, Physiatrists [Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Specialist (PM&R), Neurology and Orthopedics. Pain Management Specialists, Physiatrists (PM&R), Neurology and Orthopedics can refer back and forth based on the type of referral and access.



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2/8/18; 2/16/18; 2/23/18; 2/28/18; 5/10/18; 8/9/18; 11/8/18;
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Pain Management Specialists and Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Specialist (PM&R) can directly refer members for pain management injections to Santa Paula Hospital Interventional Radiology.

Physical therapy and occupational therapy will be allowed a direct referral by the Primary Care Physicians for an initial evaluation and an additional seven (7) visits up to a total of eight (8) visits. Thereafter, the request for additional visits can come from the physical therapy and occupational therapy providers.

In addition, nutritional counseling may be directly referred.

In addition to primary care physicians, direct referral for physical therapy can be made by the following specialists: Orthopedics, Rheumatology, Neurosurgery, Neurology, Podiatry, Physiatry (physical medicine and rehabilitation) and Pain Management. Once the Health Plan authorizes a Hand/Plastic Surgery specialist to see a VCHCP member, the Hand/Plastic Surgery Specialist may directly refer the member to physical therapy and to occupational therapy.

Background: Previously all requests for initial consultation and two (2) follow up visits with all specialty providers including all the procedures performed by the specialists during these said visits as well as additional follow up office visits, required prior authorization from the Health Plan.

Procedure: All VCHCP contracted specialists can be directly referred by PCPs using the direct referral form [EXCLUDING TERTIARY REFERRALS, (e.g., UCLA AND CHLA)]. Referrals to Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy also use this form. In addition, referrals to nutritional counseling also use this form.

Note that this policy does not apply to any tertiary care or non-contracted provider referrals. All tertiary care referrals and referrals to non-contracted providers continue to require approval by the Health Plan through the TAR procedure.

The Plan's primary care providers have been provided a two (2) part referral authorization form. The referring provider or office completes the form. Part 1 is given to the member to be taken to the specialist or treatment facility when the member presents for the first visit. Part 2 is maintained by the primary care provider. The Primary



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Care Provider may also directly fax the direct specialty referral form to the specialist.

The following are Procedures and Services included with Direct Referrals and do not require prior authorization from the specialists. Once the specialists are seeing the members, there is no authorization required for these procedures and services. Primary care physicians and specialists not mentioned below continues to require prior authorization for these procedures and services listed below. Note: these are applicable for Contracted Providers' offices and Selected Facilities Only.

| | SPECIALTY | |
|----|---------------------|---|
| 1 | Allergy | All allergy services |
| 2 | Cardiology | Office Procedure: EKG, Ziopatch (with Irythm), Ziopatch (interpretation by Cardiologist), Pacemaker monitoring. Facilities Treatment (i.e., VCMC Clinic): Exercise stress echo, echocardiogram, doppler echo, trans-thoracic echo, doppler echo (pulse wave used in conjunction with doppler echo, exercise stress test (not thallium), stress tests (all kinds) for chest pain, Holter monitor for arrhythmias, 2D-echo with Doppler for CHF, troponin test |
| 3 | Dermatology | Office Procedures: destruction of lesions by any method and repair, biopsy and excision of lesions and repair, Moh's procedures except when plastic surgery is required for closure. |
| 4 | Endocrinology | Office Procedure: Thyroid FNA biopsy; Diabetes Medical Services at Las Islas Family Medical Group such as Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT), Group Education Counseling. –and Diabetes Outpatient Self-Management Training, |
| 5 | ENT | Office or Facilities Treatment: oronasal endoscopy, laryngoscopy Office Procedures: removal of cerumen, nasal endoscopy, use of binocular microscope, nasopharyngoscopy, removal of foreign body from EAC, excision of lesion vestibule of mouth without repair, biopsy of anterior tongue, biopsy of lip, excision of tongue lesion without closure, biopsy of floor of mouth, biopsy of oropharynx, I&D of peritonsillar abscess, control of nasal hemorrhage, anterior, simple fine needle aspiration of thyroid without image guidance, thyroid core biopsy, adult tympanostomy tube placement under local anesthesia; audiometry testing; tympanometry. |
| 6 | Gastroenterology | Facilities Procedure: Colonoscopy Screening and diagnostic colonoscopy; upper GI endoscopy, monitored anesthesia care (MAC) for colonoscopy and upper GI endoscopy only |
| 7 | General Surgery | Office Procedures: needle biopsy, excision of lesions (non-cosmetic) |
| 8 | Hematology-Oncology | CBC & Ferritin laboratory services |
| 9 | Neurology | Office Procedures: EMG-NCV, EEG |
| 10 | Neurosurgery | Office Procedures: EMG-NCV, EEG |

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| 11 | Obstetrics/ Gynecology | Office Procedures: Colposcopy and biopsy, endometrial biopsy, insertion and removal of IUDs for contraception, insertion of mirena for control of menorrhagia or endometrial hyperplasia, vulvar biopsy, insertion of nexplanon. |
| 12 | Ophthalmology | Office Procedures: medical examination and evaluation/treatment, visual field examination, ophthalmic diagnostic imaging, ophthalmic biometry, glaucoma testing, ophthalmoscopy, fluorescein angiography and fundus photography with interpretation and report, diabetic retinal screening, removal of a superficial corneal foreign body at the slit lamp. |
| 13 | Oral & Maxillofacial | Orthopantomogram (panoramic x-ray) |
| 14 | Orthopedics | Office Procedures: arthrocentesis, steroid injections, fracture care including fracture reduction, treatment of dislocations, casting and immobilization, administration of Hyaluronate derivative injections. Can dispense selected prefabricated orthotics. |
| 15 | Pain Management and Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation | Office Procedures: trigger point injections, joint aspiration/injection, carpal tunnel injection, nerve block, EMG-NCV, EEG, chemodervation, facet injection, epidural injection, all with or without image guidance. |
| 16 | Plastic Surgery | Biopsies; Steroid injections for trigger finger, scar management and finger joint pathology |
| 17 | Podiatry | Office Procedures: Toenail/nail plate removal; trimming of toenails for diabetic patient; local nerve, tendon sheath and ligament injections of anesthetic and/or steroid; paring/cutting hyperkeratotic lesions; nail debridement; arthrocentesis, aspiration, and injection of joint/bursa. Can dispense selected foot orthotics for diagnosis of diabetes |
| 18 | Pulmonology | Office Procedures: pulmonary function test, office spirometry, office oximetry. |
| 19 | Rheumatology | Office Procedures: joint aspiration/injection |
| 20 | Thoracic Surgery/Vascular Surgery | |
| 21 | Urology | Office Procedures: cystoscopy for hematuria, prostate ultrasound/biopsy, urethral dilations for stricture, bladder scan/ultrasound for post void residual. |
| 22 | Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy | Initial evaluation and additional 7 visits up to a total of 8 visits. Effective 1/1/19, For PT providers, only: Additional 16 physical therapy visits beyond the initial eight (8) direct referral visits will NO LONGER require prior authorization. Requests for additional therapy beyond the 24 visits will require prior authorization with a submission of a TAR form including the initial therapy evaluation and treatment notes. Effective 1/1/19, For OT providers, only: Additional 16 occupational therapy visits beyond the initial eight (8) direct referral visits will NO LONGER require prior authorization. Requests for additional therapy beyond the 24 visits will require |



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| | | prior authorization with a submission of a TAR form including the initial therapy evaluation and treatment notes. |
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The Primary Care Providers were informed about the Ventura County Medical Center (VCMC) Referral Center Process. Many specialists on the panel of the Plan are specialists in the Ventura County Medical Center (VCMC) medical clinics and affiliated clinics. New appointments for these specialists are made through the VCMC Referral Center. These specialties are Audiology, Cardiology, Dermatology, Endocrinology, ENT, Hepatitis C, Infectious Disease, Nephrology, Neurology, Neurosurgery, Pain Management, PMR, Pediatric Neurology, Podiatry, Pulmonology and Rheumatology. For a referral to any of the VCMC physicians in these specialties, the direct referral form should be sent to the VCMC Referral Office via fax or e-Referral system. The fax number is 805-677-5263.

Below is the list of Specialties and providers handled by the VCMC Referral Center:

| Cardiology | Dermatology | Endocrinology | Gaspro/GI Positive Fit |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Dr. Abdi-Moradi | Dr. Chambers | Dr. Fogelfeld | Dr. P. Sanchez |
| Dr. Dharawat | Dr. Lynn | Dr. Pinzone | Karina Jonusas, PA |
| Dr. Nitzel | Dr. Larsen | Dr. N. Shah | |
| Dr. Olson | Melissa Ambrosio PA-C | | |
| | | | |
| Gastroenterology (GI) | Hepatitis C | Infectious Disease | Orthopedics |
| Dr. Sagar | Dr. Muzaffer | Dr. Muzaffer | Dr. Hargett |
| Dr. Underwood | Dr. Underwood | | Dr. Ragsdale |
| Dr. Verma | Alex Murray, PA | | Dr. Stennette |
| Karina Jonusas, PA | | | Dr. Takara |
| | | | Dr. Wu |
| | | | Casey Lowe, PA |
| | | | Ross Monroe, PA |
| | | | Jessica Cataldo-Ramirez, PA |
| | | | |
| Pediatric Orthopedics | Pediatric Orthopedics | Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation | Podiatry |
| Dr. M. Patel | Dr. Early | Dr. Sukumar | Dr. Pearson |
| | Dr. Maguire | | Dr. Roberg |
| | | | Dr. Vines |
| | | | |
| Pulmonology | Renal/Nephrology | Rheumatology | |
| Dr. Bajawa | Dr. Ahoubim | Dr. Greger | |



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| Dr. Lipper | Dr. S. Chan | Dr. Mory | |
| | Dr. Gandhi | | |
| | Dr. Mapara | | |
| | Dr. C. Wong | | |
| | Dr. J. Yan | | |

- A. Attachments: None
- B. References: None
- C. Reviewers/Authors: Albert Reeves, MD & Faustine Dela Cruz, RN; Date: 1/1/2011
 Committee Review: UM on 2/10/11 & QA on 2/22/11
 Reviewed/No Changes by: Faustine Dela Cruz, RN, Cecilia Cabrera-Urango, RN & Albert Reeves, MD in January 2012
 Committee Review: UM: February 9, 2012; QAC: February 28, 2012
 Reviewed/Update by: Faustine Dela Cruz, RN & Albert Reeves, MD in June 2012
 Committee Review: UM: August 16, 2012; QAC: August 28, 2012
 Reviewed/No Updates by: Faustine Dela Cruz, RN, Cecilia Cabrera-Urango, RN & Albert Reeves, MD
 Committee Review: UM: February 14, 2013; QAC: February 26, 2013
 Reviewed/Updated by: Faustine Dela Cruz, RN & Albert Reeves, MD in April 2013
 Committee Review: UM: May 9, 2013; QAC: May 28, 2013
 Reviewed/Updated by: Faustine Dela Cruz, RN & Albert Reeves, MD in November 2013
 Committee Review: UM: November 14, 2013; QAC: November 26, 2013
 Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz & Catherine Sanders, MD in January 2014
 Committee Review: UM: February 13, 2014; QAC: February 25, 2014
 Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz & Catherine Sanders, MD on March 2014
 Committee Review: UM: May 8, 2014; QAC: May 27, 2014
 Reviewed/Updated by Catherine R. Sanders, MD on January 2, 2015
 Committee Review: UM: February 12, 2015; QAC February 24, 2015
 Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz & Catherine Sanders, MD on May 2015
 Committee Review: UM: May 7, 2015; QAC June 2, 2015
 Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz & Catherine Sanders, MD in October 2015
 Committee Review: UM: November 12, 2015; QAC November 24, 2015
 Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN, Catherine Sanders, MD & Robert Sterling, MD on December 2015
 Committee Review: UM: February 11, 2016; QAC February 23, 2016
 Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN, Catherine Sanders, MD & Robert Sterling, MD on May 2016
 Committee Review: UM: May 12, 2016; QAC May 24, 2016
 Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN, Catherine Sanders, MD & Robert Sterling, MD in August 2016
 Committee Review: UM: August 11, 2016; QAC August 23, 2016
 Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN, Catherine Sanders, MD & Robert Sterling, MD in February 2017
 Committee Review: UM: February 9, 2017; QAC February 28, 2017
 Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN, Catherine Sanders, MD & Robert Sterling, MD in August 2017
 Committee Review: UM: August 10, 2017; QAC August 22, 2017



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 1/3/19; 11/12/19; 2/13/20; 5/14/20, 2/11/21, 2/17/22;
 11/10/22, 2/2/23, 2/8/24

Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN, Catherine Sanders, MD & Robert Sterling, MD in February 2018
 Committee Review: UM: February 8, 2018; QAC February 27, 2018
 Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN, Catherine Sanders, MD & Robert Sterling, MD on May 2018
 Committee Review: UM: May 10, 2018; QAC May 29, 2018
 Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN, Catherine Sanders, MD & Robert Sterling, MD in August 2018
 Committee Review: UM: August 9, 2018; QAC August 28, 2018
 Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN & Robert Sterling, MD in November 2018
 Committee Review: UM: November 8, 2018; QAC November 27, 2018
 Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN & Robert Sterling, MD in January 2019
 Committee Review: UM: February 14, 2019; QAC February 26, 2019
 Reviewed/Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN & Howard Taekman, MD in July 2019
 Committee Review: UM: November 12, 2019; QAC November 26, 2019
 Reviewed/ Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN & Howard Taekman, MD in February 2020
 Committee Review: UM: February 13, 2020; QAC February 25, 2020
 Reviewed/ Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN & Howard Taekman, MD in February 2020
 Committee Review: UM: May 14, 2020; QAC May 26, 2020
 Reviewed/ Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN & Howard Taekman, MD in August 2020
 Committee Review: UM: August 13, 2020; QAC August 25, 2020
 Reviewed/ Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN & Howard Taekman, MD in February 2021
 Committee Review: UM: February 11, 2021; QAC February 23, 2021
 Reviewed/ Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN & Howard Taekman, MD on February 2021
 Committee Review: UM: February 17, 2022; QAC February 22, 2022
 Reviewed/ Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN & Howard Taekman, MD on July 2022
 Committee Review: UM: November 10, 2022; QAC November 22, 2022
 Reviewed/ Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN & Howard Taekman, MD in February 2023
 Committee Review: UM: February 2, 2023; QAC February 7, 2023
 Reviewed/ Updated by Faustine Dela Cruz, RN & Howard Taekman, MD in February 2024
 Committee Review: UM: February 8, 2024; QAC February 27, 2024

| Revision Date | Content Revised (Yes/No) | Contributors | Review/Revision Notes |
|---------------|--------------------------|--|---|
| 2/9/17 | Yes | Catherine Sanders, MD; Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN | Annual review; updated with expansion of specialists for direct referral. |
| 8/10/17 | Yes | Catherine Sanders, MD; Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN | Added audiometry testing in the procedure's ENT can perform in the office as part of the direct referral Added procedures for Plastic Surgery that can be done by specialist as part of the direct referral. |



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| 2/8/18 | Yes | Catherine Sanders, MD; Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN | Annual review: Added local injections of anesthetic and/or steroid under procedures and services included in the direct referral that the specialists (podiatrist) can perform without prior authorization. |
| 2/16/18 | Yes | Catherine Sanders, MD; Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN | Added Oral & Maxillofacial specialty to be able to do orthopantogram (panoramic x-ray) without prior authorization. |
| 2/23/18 | Yes | Catherine Sanders, MD; Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN | Updated the services that Podiatrist can perform as part of direct referral without prior authorization |
| 2/28/18 | Yes | Catherine Sanders, MD; Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN | Updated the Specialists/providers handled by the VCMC Referral Center |
| 5/3/18 | Yes | Catherine Sanders, MD; Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN | Added: Emergency Room (ER) physicians may now directly refer members to Orthopedics specialty for urgently required consultation. |
| 5/29/18 | Yes | Catherine Sanders, MD; Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN | Added nutritional counseling to direct referral. |
| 8/8/18 | Yes | Catherine Sanders, MD; Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN | VCMC Pain Management Specialists and VCMC Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Specialist (PM&R) can directly refer members for pain management injections to Santa Paula Hospital Interventional Radiology |
| 10/11/18 | Yes | Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN | Effective 1/1/19, updated - exclusion for direct referral to contracted Non-VCMC Pain Specialists to office procedures ONLY. Office visits to contracted Non-VCMC Pain Specialists can be directly referred by PCPs. |
| 10/11/18 | Yes | Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN | Effective 1/1/19, For PT providers, only: Additional 16 physical therapy visits beyond the initial eight (8) direct referral visits will NO LONGER require prior authorization. Requests for additional therapy beyond the 24 visits will require prior authorization with a submission of a TAR form including the initial therapy evaluation and treatment notes. Effective 1/1/19, For OT providers, only: Additional 16 occupational therapy visits beyond the initial eight (8) direct referral visits will NO LONGER require prior |



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| | | | authorization. Requests for additional therapy beyond the 24 visits will require prior authorization with a submission of a TAR form including the initial therapy evaluation and treatment notes. |
| 1/3/19 | Yes | Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN | Updated list of Specialties and Providers handled by the VCMC Referral Center Updated to rolling year to this portion of policy: follow up visits will not require prior authorization as long as the member has seen the specialist within a rolling year and the visit is for the original problem. |
| 7/31/19 | Yes | Howard Taekman, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN, Meriza Ducay, RN | Neurosurgery can directly refer to VCMC Pain Management Specialists, Physiatrists [Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Specialist (PM&R)], Neurology and Orthopedics. VCMC Pain Management Specialists, Physiatrists (PM&R), Neurology and Orthopedics can refer back and forth based on the type of referral and access. Updated procedures and services included with Direct Referrals: For Orthopedics, can dispense selected prefabricated orthotics. Updated procedures and services included with Direct Referrals: For Cardiology, can administer Ziopatch (with Irythm) and Ziopatch (interpretation by Cardiologist). |
| 2/13/20 | Yes | Howard Taekman, MD Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN | Annual review; updated VCMC Referral physicians |
| 2/18/20 | Yes | Howard Taekman, MD Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN | Added tympanometry to services that ENT provider can perform without prior authorization, as part of direct referral. |
| 8/13/20 | Yes | Howard Taekman, MD Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN | Added pacemaker monitoring under procedures Cardiologist can perform in the office. |
| 2/11/21 | Yes | Howard Taekman, MD Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN | UPDATED the list of VCMC Referral Specialists |
| 2/17/22 | Yes | Howard Taekman, MD Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN | UPDATED the list of VCMC Referral Specialists |



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| | | | UPDATED urgent care and Emergency Room (ER) physicians may now directly refer members to Orthopedics AND CARDIOLOGY specialty for urgently required consultation. Added troponin test to the list services/procedures that do not require prior authorization from the cardiology specialists. |
| 11/10/22 | Yes | Howard Taekman, MD Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN | Updated to reflect certain specialties that can refer back and forth to one another. All pain management specialists and perinatology to be able to request certain services without prior authorization. Updated the section on procedures and services that specialists can perform without prior authorization to reflect upper GI endoscopy and Monitored Anesthesia Care (MAC) service for colonoscopy and upper GI endoscopy that Gastroenterology specialty can perform without prior authorization. |
| 2/2/23 | Yes | Howard Taekman, MD Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN | UPDATED the list of VCMC Referral Specialists |
| 2/8/24 | Yes | Howard Taekman, MD Robert Sterling, MD, Faustine Dela Cruz, RN | UPDATED to add removal of a superficial corneal foreign body at the slit lamp under services Ophthalmology can provide without prior authorization. Updated list of specialists handled by the VCMC Referral Center. |