Mondragon, Tabitha, HCA

From: JOHN RATMEYER <jrlilirat@msn.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 12, 2026 2:25 PM
To: HCA-madrules
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Regarding Amendments to New Mexico Administrative Code (NMAC) Rule 8.324.7

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As a pediatrician working and living in Gallup for nearly 35 years, I'm well acquainted with the need for and the hardship endured by families who must access care far from home, especially in the event of a child developing catastrophic illness (like respiratory failure due to viral infection during the winter season requiring transfer to a pediatric intensive care unit) or significant chronic disease (requiring specialty care only available at a tertiary care center).

The proposed amendments to the rules, specifically those found it the Prior Authorization & Utilization Review section (8.34.247.15), subsection B. (referrals for travel outside the home community), referencing extending the distance requiring prior authorization from 65 miles to 120 miles, still fall far short of what are needed to help support affected children and their families. Any conversation with both general and specialty pediatricians in our state will yield the information that some children may need to travel as far as Phoenix (420 miles from Albuquerque, for certain transplant services) or even Denver (450 miles from Albuquerque for certain pediatric cardiothoracic surgery services) to access specialty care which is unavailable in New Mexico. ***Given the distances to cities like Phoenix and Denver, from Albuquerque, one might think setting a number of 500 miles (or even further for certain areas of New Mexico) might be a more realistic distance over which seeking prior authorization would be needed.*** So long as such children are under the care of a New Mexico doc and there are no alternative services within 500 miles, it seems unnecessary to require prior authorization for those services. Certainly, 120 miles, while further than 65 miles, is still far too short a distance to cover for many specialty referrals, even within the state. I respectfully request that your working group reconsider this detail to significantly liberalize the distance covered.

Thanks for the opportunity to contact you re: these proposed amendments and changes to this section of NMAC. Thanks for your understanding and consideration. Blessings and peace...

John Ratmeyer, M.D., FAAP
Gallup Indian Medical Center Pediatrics, Retired 2024
New Mexico Pediatric Society and American Academy of Pediatrics
508 S. Country Club Drive
Gallup, NM 87301-6016
EMail: jrlilirat@msn.com