

Medicare Advantage Medical Policy



Nonprofit corporations and independent licensees
of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association

Genetic Testing for Retinal Dystrophies – Medicare Advantage

Medicare Advantage Plan

☒ Medicare Plus BlueSM

☒ BCN AdvantageSM

UM Committee Approval Date: 7/15/2026

Effective Date: 8/15/2026

Description

Genetic testing for inherited retinal dystrophies is a laboratory analysis performed on DNA obtained from peripheral blood, saliva, or buccal cell sample. The testing involves molecular analysis of genes associated with inherited retinal dystrophies, including but not limited to RPE65, RPGR, PRPH2, ABCA4, EYS, and numerous other genes known to be associated with retinal degeneration. The purpose of testing is to identify pathogenic or likely pathogenic variants associated with inherited retinal disorders, such as Leber congenital amaurosis, retinitis pigmentosa, Stargardt disease, cone-rod dystrophy, and other hereditary retinal degeneration syndromes.

Related Medical Coverage Policies

- None
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Policy Guidelines

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan (BCBSM) and Blue Care Network of Michigan (BCN) adhere to guidance from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), including when performing organization determinations for Medicare Advantage plan members. CMS Medicare statutes, regulations, manuals, National Coverage Determinations (NCDs), Local Coverage Determinations (LCDs), Local Coverage Articles (LCAs) and other sub-regulatory guidance provide the clinical guidelines for coverage determinations, payment integrity functions, and all other uses by CMS regulations. When CMS Medicare guidance is silent, incomplete, or insufficient, CMS permits BCBSM/BCN to utilize “internal coverage criteria”, such as independent criteria, health plan policy research, LCD/LCAs outside the services area or research from independent medical research repositories (i.e., Hayes) for coverage policies 42 CFR § 422.101. BCBSM/BCN internal medical coverage policies are developed and based on current evidence in widely accepted treatment guidelines or clinical literature; in addition, they address how clinical benefits may or may not outweigh member harm.

Clinical review follows guidance provided in the BCBSM Medicare Advantage Coverage Determination Hierarchy policy, which may be found at <https://www.bcbsm.com/providers/mpradmin/> by entering the policy name.

Coverage Guidance

To ensure consistency with coverage guidance, the Medicare statutes, regulations, coverage manuals, NCD, LCD, and LCA should be reviewed and applied first. BCBSM/BCN internal coverage criteria should only be applied when CMS guidance is silent, incomplete, or insufficient for a code.

Apart from durable medical equipment (DME), Medicare Administrative Contractor (MAC) jurisdiction for the purpose of clinical determination is based upon place of service. The place of service for laboratory testing is defined as the geographic location of the reference laboratory. Non-jurisdictional LCD/LCAs may not be utilized for a determination unless they have been specifically identified as internal coverage criteria by the policy. Alternatively, jurisdiction for DME MAC is determined by the member place of residence. Please see CMS Medicare Administrative Contractors (MAC) table for state MAC assignments below.

CMS Guidance	Additional Guidance
National Coverage Determinations 90.2 – Next Generation Sequencing (NGS) 310.1 – Routine Costs in Clinical Trials For additional information related to clinical trials related to genetic testing for retinal dystrophies, please refer to this URL: https://clinicaltrials.gov Local Coverage Determinations and Articles WPS L36807, A57772 – MoIDX: Molecular Diagnostic Tests (MDT)* L38429, A57100 – MoIDX: Repeat Germline Testing* CGS L36021, A56973 – MoIDX: Molecular Diagnostic Tests (MDT)* L38288, A57141 – MoIDX: Repeat Germline Testing* First Coast L34519, A57451 – Molecular Pathology Procedures A58918 – Molecular Pathology and Genetic Testing Noridian JE & JF L35160, A57526 – MoIDX: Molecular Diagnostic Tests (MDT)* L38351, A57331 – MoIDX: Repeat Germline Testing* Novitas L35062, A56541 – Biomarkers Overview	BCBSM/BCN will follow CMS guidance as the primary source for coverage determinations. However, in instances where CMS guidance is silent, incomplete, or insufficient for a particular code, BCBSM/BCN internal coverage criteria will be applied to ensure consistent and informed decision-making. In such cases, please refer to the relevant BCBSM/BCN policy for guidance: <i>Genetic Testing for Retinal Dystrophies</i> To access this policy, please visit the BCBSM Medical Policy Router Search page at https://www.bcbsm.com/providers/mpradmin/ and enter the policy name in the search field.

CMS Guidance	Additional Guidance
A58917 – Molecular Pathology and Genetic Testing Palmetto L35025, A56853 – MoIDX: Molecular Diagnostic Tests (MDT)* L38274, A58017 – MoIDX: Repeat Germline Testing* Wellpoint Federal L35000, A56199 – Molecular Pathology Procedures	

Code	Description
81401	Molecular pathology procedure, Level 2 (e.g., 2-10 SNPs, 1 methylated variant, or 1 somatic variant [typically using nonsequencing target variant analysis], or detection of a dynamic mutation disorder/triplet repeat) [MT-ATP6 - mitochondrially encoded ATP synthase 6 (e.g., neuropathy with ataxia and retinitis pigmentosa, Leigh syndrome)]
81404	Molecular pathology procedure, Level 5 (e.g., analysis of 2-5 exons by DNA sequence analysis, mutation scanning or duplication/deletion variants of 6-10 exons, or characterization of a dynamic mutation disorder/triplet repeat by Southern blot analysis) [CRX - cone-rod homeobox (e.g., cone-rod dystrophy 2, Leber congenital amaurosis), full gene sequence], [PRPH2 - peripherin 2 retinal degeneration, slow (e.g., retinitis pigmentosa), full gene sequence], [CLRN1 - clarin 1 (e.g., Usher syndrome, type 3), full gene sequence], [RHO – rhodopsin, (e.g., retinitis pigmentosa), full gene sequence] [RP1 – retinitis pigmentosa 1 (e.g., retinitis pigmentosa), full gene sequence] [USH1G - Usher syndrome 1G, autosomal recessive, full gene sequence]
81405	Molecular pathology procedure, Level 6 (e.g., analysis of 6-10 exons by DNA sequence analysis, mutation scanning or duplication/deletion variants of 11-25 exons, regionally targeted cytogenomic array analysis)
81406	Molecular pathology procedure, Level 7 (e.g., analysis of 11-25 exons by DNA sequence analysis, mutation scanning or duplication/deletion variants of 26-50 exons, cytogenomic array analysis for neoplasia) [PCDH15 - protocadherin-related 15 (e.g., Usher syndrome type 1F), duplication/deletion analysis] [RPE65 - retinal pigment epithelium-specific protein 65kDa (e.g., retinitis pigmentosa, Leber congenital amaurosis), full gene sequence]
81407	Molecular pathology procedure, Level 8 (e.g., analysis of 26-50 exons by DNA sequence analysis, mutation scanning or duplication/deletion variants of >50 exons, sequence analysis of multiple genes on one platform) [MYO7A - myosin VIIA, (e.g., Usher syndrome, type 1), full gene sequence] [PCDH15 - protocadherin-related 15, (e.g., Usher syndrome, type 1), full gene sequence] [USH1C - Usher syndrome 1C - autosomal recessive, severe (e.g., Usher syndrome, type 1), full gene sequence]
81408	Molecular pathology procedure, Level 9 (e.g., analysis of >50 exons in a single gene by DNA sequence analysis) [ABCA4 - ATP-binding cassette, sub-family A [ABC1], member 4, (e.g., Stargardt disease, age-related macular degeneration), full gene sequence]

	[CDH23 - cadherin-related 23, (e.g., Usher syndrome, type 1), full gene sequence] [USH2A - Usher syndrome 2A - autosomal recessive, mild (e.g., Usher syndrome, type 2), full gene sequence]
81434	Hereditary retinal disorders (e.g., retinitis pigmentosa, Leber congenital amaurosis, cone-rod dystrophy), genomic sequence analysis panel, must include sequencing of at least 15 genes, including ABCA4, CNGA1, CRB1, EYS, PDE6A, PDE6B, PRPF31, PRPH2, RDH12, RHO, RP1, RP2, RPE65, RPGR, and USH2A
81479	Unlisted molecular pathology procedure

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* CMS MoIDX Program

The MoIDX Program, administered by Palmetto GBA, is a Medicare Molecular Diagnostic Program that aims to identify and establish coverage and reimbursement for molecular diagnostic tests. This program is implemented by several Medicare Administrative Contractors (MACs), including **WPS, CGS, Noridian, and Palmetto**.

The MoIDX Program evaluates genetic tests to determine their analytical and clinical validity (AV/CV) and clinical utility (CU), ensuring that each test meets Medicare criteria.

The program's coverage determinations are maintained in the DEX™ Diagnostic Exchange registry. Dex Diagnostic Exchange Registry Coverage Determinations:

1. Not Covered: Not covered tests in the Dex Registry have undergone a review of their clinical utility and analytical validity and have been determined to not meet the requirements for medical necessity under Section 1862(a)(1)(A) of the Social Security Act. As a result, they are not considered medically reasonable or necessary for Medicare coverage.
2. No Determinations: Tests that have not completed the required technical assessment (TA) review are, by default, also considered not medically reasonable or necessary for Medicare under Section 1862(a)(1)(A) until the review is completed. The MoIDX Program does not provide coverage for tests provided with dates of services prior to the effective date of approval.
3. Covered: Covered Tests in Dex Registry have completed the required TA review and have been determined to be medically reasonable and necessary for Medicare under Section 1862(a)(1)(A). However, coverage is not automatic and is subject to the following conditions:
 - a. The test must meet the applicable criteria outlined in NCDs, LCDs, and LCAs; and
 - b. The patient must exhibit signs or symptoms of a relevant disease or condition, making the test medically necessary for their care.

For specific coding and billing information on covered and excluded tests, please refer to the MoIDX website at <https://www.palmettogba.com/MoIDX>. This website provides up-to-date information on the program's coverage determinations and guidelines.

NOTE: Per § 2.3.3. of the Molecular Diagnostic Program [MoIDX®] Manual, the MoIDX Program does not provide coverage for tests that have not been reviewed and approved through the MoIDX process or for tests provided with dates of services prior to the effective date of approval. For additional information regarding what tests will fall into a Medicare benefit category or which tests are statutory excluded (e.g., predictive, prenatal, and carrier testing and tests considered screening in the absence of clinical signs and symptoms of disease that are not specifically identified by the law) please refer to <https://www.palmettogba.com/palmetto/moldxv2.nsf/DID/DPR5GEM991>

The above information is current as of the review date for this policy. However, the coverage issues and policies maintained by CMS are updated and/or revised periodically. Therefore, the most current CMS information may not be contained in this document.

Please refer to the Medicare Coverage Database website at <https://www.cms.gov/medicare-coverage-database/search.aspx> for the most current applicable NCD, LCD, LCA, and CMS Online Manual System Transmittals. For any code associated with a product or service determined to be noncovered by policy (either CMS or health plan policy if CMS is silent) medical record review, including prior authorization, will not be required.

CMS Medicare Administrative Contractors (MAC) Jurisdictions Guidance

Part A and Part B MAC Jurisdictions	
Wisconsin Physicians Service Insurance Corporation (WPS)	IA, IN, KS, MI, MO, NE
CGS Administrators, LLC	KY, OH
First Coast Service Options, Inc	FL, PR, US VI
Noridian Healthcare Solutions, LLC Jurisdiction JE	CA, HI, NV, American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands
Noridian Healthcare Solutions, LLC Jurisdiction JF	AK, AZ, ID, MT, ND, OR, SD, UT, WA, WY
Novitas Solutions Inc.	AR, CO, DC, DE, LA, MD, MS, NJ, NM, OK, PA, TX
Palmetto GBA	AL, GA, TN, NC, SC, VA, WV
Wellpoint Federal - Previously known as National Government Services, Inc. (NGS)	CT, IL, MA, ME, MN, NH, NY, RI, VT, WI
DME MAC Jurisdictions	
CGS Administrators, LLC, Jurisdictions JB and JC	AL, AR, CO, FL, GA, IL, IN, KY, LA, MI, MN, MS, NM, NC, OH, OK, Puerto Rico, SC, TN, TX, VA, US Virgin Islands, WI, WV
Noridian Healthcare Solutions, LLC, Jurisdictions JA and JD	AK, American Samoa, AZ, CA, CT, DE, DC, Guam, HI, ID, IA, KS, MA, MD, ME, MO, MT, ND, NE, NH, NJ, NV, NY, Northern Mariana Islands, OR, PA, RI, SD, UT, VT, WA, WY

Important Reminder

BCBSM and BCN follow CMS Medicare coverage guidance to limit coverage to items and services that are reasonable and necessary for the diagnosis or treatment of an illness or injury or to improve the functioning of a malformed body member. Medicare Advantage Medical Policies list the criteria BCBSM and BCN use to decide which medical services are considered “reasonable and necessary” when Medicare coverage rules are not fully developed, or as otherwise may be permitted by CMS Medicare regulations. Individual member benefit plan documents, such as the Evidence of Coverage and Annual Notice of Change, as well as applicable laws govern benefit coverage, including any inclusion, exclusion, and/or other restrictions.

Medicare Advantage Medical policies are created when permitted by CMS Medicare regulations, reviewed regularly, and may be revised periodically. BCBSM/BCN Medical Policies are proprietary and should not be copied or disseminated without the express, prior written approval of BCBSM. All providers are required to review applicable BCBSM reimbursement policies prior to claim submission and bill for covered services in accordance with those policies. Additionally, providers contracted with BCBSM or BCN’s Medicare Advantage network(s) should review the provider manual for any additional claim submission

requirements. Providers not contracted with BCBSM or BCN's Medicare Advantage network may be required to submit documentation to BCBSM, BCN, or its delegated entity supporting billed claims, including but not limited to applicable medical records.

Note: U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval for a specific indication or the issuance of a CPT code is not sufficient for a procedure to be considered medically reasonable and necessary. Similarly, the presence of a procedure/device code or payment amount for the service in the Medicare fee schedule does not necessarily indicate coverage. If a service is deemed not reasonable and necessary, to treat illness or injury for any reason (including lack of safety and efficacy because it is an experimental procedure, etc.), the procedure is considered not covered.

Disclaimer: This medical policy is not an authorization, certification, explanation of benefits, or a contract for the services, devices, or drugs that is referenced in the medical policy. Medical policies do not constitute medical advice and do not guarantee any results or outcomes or guarantee payment. The medical policy is not intended to replace independent medical judgment for the treatment of individuals. Treating physicians and health care providers are solely responsible for determining what care to provide for their patients. Identification of selected brand names of devices, tests and procedures in a medical coverage policy is for reference only and is not an endorsement of any one device, test, or procedure over another.

Pursuant to Section 1557 and Section 504, Blue Cross does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex (including sex characteristics, intersex traits; pregnancy or related conditions; sexual orientation; gender identity, and sex stereotypes). This includes our rules, benefit designs and medical policies.

BCBSM/BCN Medicare Advantage Policy History

Policy Effective Date	UM Committee Approval Date	Comments
08/17/2024	07/17/2024	Medicare Advantage policy established
08/16/2025	07/16/2025	Annual Review: MA Policy Foundational Language updated. Adoption of JUMP policy updates
08/15/2026	07/15/2026	Annual Review: Reformatted guidance and code tables. Adoption of JUMP policy updates