

# Chapter 5

## Credentialing and Organizational Assessment

### Overview

This chapter describes the South Country Health Alliance (South Country) Credentialing Program.

### Organizational Assessments

South Country maintains contracts with Organizational Providers, including but not limited to:

- Hospitals
- Home Health Care Agencies
- Skilled Nursing Facilities
- Free Standing Ambulatory Surgery Centers
- Adult Licensed Residential Crisis
- Children's Residential Facility - Mental Health Treatment
- Children's Residential Facility - Substance Abuse Treatment
- Eating Disorders Residential Facility
- Mental Health Residential Treatment, IRTS, or Residential Crisis
- Partial Psych/Partial Hospitalization - Free standing only
- Substance Abuse Treatment - Outpatient and / or Residential / Inpatient / Peer Recovery
- Outpatient Treatment Program

These facilities are assessed in compliance with National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA), Center for Medicare & Medicaid (CMS), Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and Department of Human Services (DHS) statutes and regulations prior to contracting with South Country and then re-assessed every 36 months unless approval stipulations require re-assessment at earlier intervals.

The organizational assessment and re-assessment processes require determination that each Organizational Provider is:

- licensed to operate in the state.
- in compliance with applicable state and/or federal requirements.
- in good standing with state and federal regulatory bodies.
- reviewed and approved by an appropriate accrediting body, or meets the NCQA standards for Assessment of Organizational Providers; and
- maintains professional and general liability coverage that meets contractually established limits.

## Office Site-Visit Surveys

South Country may conduct an onsite quality assessment (survey) if an Organizational Provider has no accreditation status in the state, if CMS or the state has not conducted a site review of the provider or the survey is greater than three years at the time of assessment, or for any reason South Country deems it appropriate to monitor concerns about member care or safety. Organizational Providers located in “rural” areas as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau are generally excluded from the onsite survey per NCQA standards; however, South Country reserves the right to conduct an onsite survey regardless of the provider’s location.

The office site survey includes, but is not limited to, an assessment of the following:

- Physical accessibility
- Physical appearance
- Adequacy of waiting room and exam space
- Appointment availability
- Adequacy of medical record keeping
- Patient complaint system
- Medication administration
- Security and confidentiality
- Quality management
- Human resources

A copy of South Country’s site survey tool and standards are available for review. Contact the South Country organizational assessment specialist at 507-431-6061 or [orgassessments@mnscha.org](mailto:orgassessments@mnscha.org) with any questions regarding the site survey process.

## Practitioner Credentialing

The process used to determine if a practitioner is qualified and competent to render acceptable care to South Country members.

The South Country Provider Network Department will determine the need for practitioners in the South Country Network. All actions related to acceptance, denial, discipline, and termination of participation status of an individual are governed by South Country’s credentialing policy. To access a copy of the most recent policy, contact the Credentialing Department [credentialing@mnscha.org](mailto:credentialing@mnscha.org).

***Practitioners should not provide services to South Country members until their credentialing process has been completed. South Country has no obligation to reimburse claims submitted for practitioner’s services prior to completion of their credentialing process.***

South Country requires all practitioners completing the credentialing process to be enrolled with the State of Minnesota Department of Human Services as Minnesota Health Care Programs (MHCP) providers prior to credentialing. Practitioners may enroll here: [Enroll with Minnesota Health Care Programs / Minnesota Department of Human Services](#).

South Country collects and processes all credentialing applications in accordance with the NCQA, CMS, MN DHS statutes and regulations. Applicants are expected to cooperate fully in providing all documents requested by South Country.

Per MN Statute 62Q.097, South Country is required to process an initial "clean" credentialing application, meaning an application that is complete, in the format required by South Country,

and includes all information and substantiation required by South Country and does not require evaluation of any identified potential quality or safety concerns within 45 days. South Country will collect credentialing information and conduct primary source verification, and make a credentialing decision within the specified time frame after receiving the clean application unless South Country identifies a substantive quality or safety concern in the course of the practitioner credentialing that requires further investigation, at which time, upon notice to the practitioner, South Country is allowed 30 additional days to investigate any quality or safety concerns. Per NCQA Credentialing Standards, South Country is required to process a recredentialing application within 36 months of the initial credentialing approval and again every 36 months thereafter. South Country shall notify the practitioner in writing of the credentialing decision within 30 calendar days after a credentialing determination has been made.

### **Who must be credentialed?**

Practitioners who have an independent relationship with South Country must be credentialed. An independent relationship exists when South Country selects and directs its members to see a specific practitioner or group of practitioners whom members can select as primary care practitioners. Types of practitioners include but are not limited to:

- Doctoral Level Practitioner (Not Mental Health)
  - Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS, MBBCh)
  - Chiropractor (DC)
  - Dentist (DDS, DMD - Medical)
  - Optometrist (OD)
  - Physician (MD, DO)
  - Podiatrist (DPM)
  - Resident – those practicing outside their residency program for greater than 90 days or who have not yet graduated (within months) but intend to affiliate with the clinic requesting credentialing upon graduation
  - Locum Tenens
- Allied Health Practitioner
  - Acupuncturist (LAc, MAc)
  - Certified Nurse Midwife (CNM)
  - Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS)
  - Nurse Practitioner (NP)
  - Physician Assistant (PA)
- Mental Health Practitioner
  - Certified Nurse Specialist (CNS)
  - Licensed Alcohol & Drug Counselor (LADC) (only applicable if not billing under facility)
  - Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW)
  - Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker (LICSW)
  - Licensed Independent Social Worker (LISW)

- Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT)
- Licensed Mental Health Counselor (LMHC)
- Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor (LPCC)
- Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC)
- Licensed Psychologist (LP)
- Psychiatrist (MD, DO, MBBS, MBBCh)
- Psychologist (MA, PhD, PsyD)
- **For Dental Providers:**
  - Dental (DDS)
    - Credentialing application may be accessed on the Delta Dental website. Visit [www.deltadentalmn.org/providers](http://www.deltadentalmn.org/providers) for more information.

### **Credentialing and Recredentialing Application Process**

Applications should be submitted to South Country at least 60 days prior to a practitioner's start date at a clinic or facility. **South Country does not retroactively apply effective dates.**

Submit a completed Minnesota Uniform Initial or Reappointment Application via the Minnesota Credentialing Collaborative (MCC) web portal - [Minnesota Credentialing Collaborative \(credentialsmart.net\)](http://credentialsmart.net), including the following required attachments:

- A release authorizing South Country to evaluate the practitioner's current license, relevant training and/or experience, health status, character, ethics, and any other criteria adopted by South Country for participation. Please note that the Authorization Release form must be specific to South Country and be signed and dated by the practitioner within 30 days of submitting the application. Electronic signatures are accepted. Clinic staff and rubber-stamped signatures will not be accepted.
- A completed Disclosure Question form with explanations for all affirmative answers. The Disclosure Question form must be signed and dated by the practitioner within 30 days of submitting the application. Electronic signatures are accepted. Clinic staff and rubber-stamped signatures will not be accepted.
- A current copy of professional license
- A current copy of DEA registration (if applicable)
- A current copy of malpractice liability insurance certificate

### **Recredentialing**

Recredentialing is the process whereby South Country verifies the status of a participating practitioner. Recredentialing is performed every three years (36 months). Recredentialing is conditional upon the practitioner continuing to meet South Country credentialing and quality performance standards which include but are not limited to:

- Member complaints
- Results of quality reviews
- Utilization management information
- Member satisfaction surveys, where applicable
- Medical record reviews, when available

- Results of office site visits, where applicable
- Results of ongoing monitoring of licensing sanctions and expiration dates
- Results of ongoing monitoring of exclusions/sanctions from state and federal programs (e.g., MN DHS, CMS)

Initial and recredentialing applications are evaluated by credentialing staff to determine eligibility to participate in South Country's network. The verification process and review are completed in accordance with South Country policies and includes a Medical Director and/or Credentialing Committee review. South Country's Medical Director will review and approve clean practitioner applications which meet South Country's established criteria. Practitioner applications which do not meet established criteria will be reviewed by the South Country's Medical Director and Credentialing Committee. South Country's Medical Director and Credentialing Committee will make the final determination regarding the acceptance of a practitioner whose application does not meet the established criteria for South Country's network.

Applicants may contact South Country's Credentialing Department at any time during the credentialing process to inquire about the status of their application. South Country will contact the practitioner if the practitioner's information is obtained and upon which the determination is made varies from the information on the application within 3 business days after South Country determines the application is not "clean". The practitioner has the right to review information submitted to support their credentialing application and to correct any erroneous information. Corrective statements will be placed in the practitioner's credentialing file, but this does not require South Country to alter or delete any information contained in the file.

The National Practitioner Data Bank will be queried as part of the application review process and a report may be submitted to appropriate state licensing boards and/or the Data Bank if the application is denied for issues related to competence.

For important credentialing information, tips, practitioner's rights, and forms please visit the credentialing page on the South Country website - [Credentialing – South Country Health Alliance](#).

## **Credentialing Committee**

Members of the South Country Credentialing Committee are appointed by South Country's Medical Director on behalf of the South Country Board of Directors. The Medical Director ensures multidisciplinary membership with representation of various practitioner types and specialties. The Credentialing Committee meets monthly to review variation files referred to the committee by the Medical Director.

## **Actions**

The Medical Director and/or Credentialing Committee may accept, accept with restrictions, or deny a practitioner's request for participation. Likewise, they may request further information from a practitioner, table an application pending outcome of an investigation, or take any other action deemed appropriate.

The Medical Director and/or Credentialing Committee have the final authority to act on determinations for credentialing of individual practitioners, providers, and sites.

## **Notification of Decision**

The practitioner will be notified of the Medical Director's and/or Credentialing Committee's determination via the MCC web portal or email within 30 days after a credentialing determination has been made.

The notification reports any applicable restrictions placed on the practitioner's participation status. If the Credentialing Committee determines restriction, the practitioner is given the facts upon which the decision was based.

If the Credentialing Committee decides to accept an application with restrictions or to deny participation, the practitioner is advised and notified of the right and process to appeal the decision.

## **Appeals**

A practitioner may appeal the Credentialing Committee's decision to accept an application with restrictions or to deny an application due to concerns related to professional competency. The practitioner must request a hearing, in writing, within 30 days of notification.

An Appeals Committee conducts a hearing for individual practitioners and makes a recommendation to the Board of Directors to uphold, reject or modify the decision of the Credentialing Committee.

## **Delegation**

South Country may delegate certain credentialing and recredentialing functions to specific participating organizations ("Delegates"). The credentialing activities of Delegates shall comply with South Country credentialing policies unless otherwise specified in the delegation agreement. South Country shall retain full and final authority for all delegated credentialing activities and retain the ultimate right to accept or reject practitioners into the South Country Provider Network.

## **Practitioner Office Quality Review Site Visits**

South Country conducts office-site quality reviews when three or more member complaints are received in a twelve-month period about the quality of care provided by a specific practitioner or facility. However, South Country reserves the right to conduct an office-site quality review visit on any practitioner/provider site without meeting the complaint threshold if the complaint is determined to be severe enough to endanger members' health and well-being. A summary of the site visit, including findings, will be given to the practitioner and affiliated facility.

If a practitioner or facility is deemed to have not met the established South Country quality of care thresholds, a corrective action plan will be requested to address identified issues.

## **Other Reviews**

South Country may obtain information about licensure and/or Office of Inspector General (OIG) actions taken against its participating practitioners. If such licensure actions indicate a disciplinary action or OIG exclusion, South Country shall enforce the necessary disciplinary or termination measures which are appropriate depending on the information obtained.

## **Practitioners that do not require credentialing**

Practitioners who practice exclusively within an inpatient setting and provide care for members being directed to a hospital and/or free-standing facility. Types of practitioners include but are not limited to:

Advanced Practice Nurse Prescriber (APNP)

Anesthesiologist (MD) – Pain Management/Medicine require credentialing

Audiologist (AUD)

Certified Radiologic Technologist (CRT)

Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA)  
Certified Surgical Assistant (CSA)  
Diagnostic Radiologist (MD)  
Emergency Room Physician (MD)  
Hospitalist (MD)  
Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor (LADC)  
Licensed Dietitian (LD)  
Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)  
Licensed Nutritionist (LN)  
Occupational Therapist (OT)  
Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA)  
Pathologist (MD)  
Pharmacist (BScPH, BSpH) - PHARMD - Medical Therapy Management requires credentialing  
Physical Therapists (PT)  
Physical Therapy Assistant (PTA)  
Radiologist (MD)  
Radiology Technician (RT)  
Registered Dietitians (RD)  
Registered Nurse (RN)  
Registered Physical Therapist (RPT)  
Registered Radiology Technician (RRT)  
Registered Respiratory Therapist (RRT)  
Speech Therapists/Speech Pathologist (ST, SP)  
Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP)