

October 20, 2009

PLASTIC RECONSTRUCTIVE SURGERY

1. PURPOSE: This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive establishes policy for conducting plastic reconstructive surgery.

2. BACKGROUND

a. Plastic reconstructive surgery consists of those surgical procedures performed for the revision of external bodily structures which deviate from normal either from congenital or acquired causes.

b. Definitions

(1) **Medically Necessary.** Medically necessary is defined in accordance with [Title 38, Code of Federal Regulations \(CFR\) §17.38](#). Care referred to in the “medical benefits package” will be provided to individuals only if it is determined by appropriate health care professionals that the care is needed to promote, preserve, or restore the health of the individual and is consistent with generally accepted standards of medical practice.

(2) **Promote health.** Care is deemed to promote health if the care will enhance the quality of life or daily functional level of the Veteran, identify a predisposition for development of a condition or early onset of disease which can be partly or totally ameliorated by monitoring or early diagnosis and treatment, and prevent future disease.

(3) **Preserve health.** Care is deemed to preserve health if the care will maintain the current quality of life or daily functional level of the Veteran, prevent the progression of disease, cure disease, or extend life span.

(4) **Restore health.** Care is deemed to restore health if the care will restore the quality of life or daily functional level that has been lost due to illness or injury.

3. POLICY: It is VHA policy that plastic reconstructive surgery is performed only for procedures deemed medically necessary.

4. ACTION

a. **National Director of Surgical Services.** The National Director of Surgical Services is responsible for maintaining a list of all VA medical facilities with the necessary capability to serve as referral centers from other facilities for plastic reconstructive surgical procedures. This list will be updated periodically and made available to all medical facilities.

b. **Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) Director.** The VISN Director is responsible for ensuring that capability exists for providing plastic and reconstructive surgical procedures for patients within the VISN.

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c. **Facility Director.** The facility Director is responsible for ensuring that plastic and reconstructive surgical procedures when performed are not undertaken exclusively for cosmetic purposes.

5. REFERENCE: 38 CFR §17.38, Medical benefits package.

6. FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITY: The Office of Patient Care Services (11), Medical-Surgical Services (111) is responsible for the contents of this Directive. Questions may be referred to the National Director of Surgical Services at (202) 461-7122.

7. RESCISSIONS: Manual M-2, Part XIV, Chapter 12 is rescinded. This VHA Directive expires on October 31, 2014.

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