SECTION FIFTEEN — GRIEVANCE (COMPLAINT) PROCEDURE

Grievances (Complaints). Our grievance procedure applies to any issue not relating to a medical necessity or experimental or investigational determination by us. For example, it applies to contractual benefit denials or issues or concerns you have regarding our administrative policies or access to providers.

1. **Filing a Grievance.** You can contact us by phone at 1-800-300-8181 (TTY 711); the number on your ID card or, in writing to file a grievance. You may submit an oral Grievance in connection with a denial of a Referral or a covered benefit determination. We may require that you sign a written acknowledgement of Your oral Grievance, prepared by Us.

   Mail your written Grievance to:
   Complaint Specialist
   Quality Management Department
   Empire BlueCross BlueShield HealthPlus
   9 Pine St., 14th Floor
   New York, NY 10005

   You can also fax the grievance to us at 1-866-495-8716.

   When we receive your grievance, we will mail an acknowledgment letter within 15 business days. The acknowledgment letter will include the name, address, and telephone number of the person handling your grievance, and indicate what additional information, if any, must be provided.

   We keep all requests and discussions confidential and we will take no discriminatory action because of your issue. We have a process for both standard and expedited grievances, depending on the nature of your inquiry.

2. **Grievance Determination.** Qualified personnel will review your grievance, or if it is a clinical matter, a licensed, certified or registered health care professional will look into it. We will decide the grievance and notify you within the following timeframes:

Expedited/Urgent Grievances:	By phone, within 48 hours of receipt of all necessary information. In writing, within 3 business days after we notify you by phone.
Referrals/Covered Benefit Determination:	In writing, within 30 calendar days of receipt of all necessary information.
All Other Grievances: (that are not in relation to a claim or request for a service)	In writing, within 45 calendar days of receipt of all necessary information.

3. **Assistance.** If you remain dissatisfied with our grievance determination, or at any other time you are dissatisfied, You may:

   Call the New York State Department of Health at 1-800-206-8125 or write them at:
   New York State Department of Health
   Corning Tower
   Empire State Plaza
   Albany, NY 12237
   www.health.ny.gov

   If You need assistance filing a grievance or appeal, You may also contact the state independent Consumer Assistance Program at:
   Community Health Advocates
   633 3rd Ave. 10th Floor
   New York, NY 10017
   Or call toll free: 1-888-614-5400, or e-mail cha@cssny.org
   www.communityhealthadvocates.org

D. **Grievance Appeals**. If you are not satisfied with the resolution of Your Grievance, You or Your designee my file an Appeal by phone or in writing. You have up to 60 business days from receipt of the Grievance determination to file an Appeal.

   When we received Your Appeal, We will mail an acknowledgement letter within 15 business days. The acknowledgement letter will include the name, address, and telephone number of the person handling Your Appeal and indicate what additional information, if any, must be provided.

   One or more qualified personnel at a higher level than the personnel that rendered the Grievance determination will review it, or if it is a clinical matter, a clinical peer reviewer will look into it. We will decide the Appeal and notify You in writing within the following timeframes:

Expedited/Urgent Grievances:	Within 48 hours of receipt of all necessary information.
All Other Grievances:	Within 30 calendar days of receipt of all necessary information.

E. **Assistance**. If you remain dissatisfied with Our Appeal determination, or at any other time You are dissatisfied, You may:

   Call the New York State Department of Health at 1-800-206-8125 or write them at:
   New York State Department of Health
   Corning Tower
   Empire State Plaza

Albany, NY 12237
www.health.ny.gov

If you need assistance filing a grievance or appeal, You may also contact the state independent Consumer Assistance Program at:
Community Health Advocates
633 3rd Ave. 10th Floor
New York, NY 10017
Or call toll free: 1-888-614-5400, or e-mail cha@cssny.org
www.communityhealthadvocates.org

SECTION SIXTEEN — EXTERNAL APPEAL

External Appeals

1. Your right to an external appeal

Under certain circumstances, you have a right to an external appeal of a denial of coverage. Specifically, if the Plan has denied coverage on the basis that the service is not medically necessary or is an experimental or investigational treatment, you or your representative may appeal that decision to an External Appeal Agent, an independent entity certified by the State to conduct such appeals.

2. Your right to appeal a determination that a service is not medically necessary

If the Plan has denied coverage on the basis that the service is not medically necessary, you may appeal to an External Appeal Agent if you satisfy the following two (2) criteria:

- The service, procedure or treatment must otherwise be a Covered Service under the Subscriber Contract; and
- You must have received a final adverse determination through the Plan's internal appeal process and the Plan must have upheld the denial or you and the Plan must agree in writing to waive any internal appeal.

3. Your right to appeal a determination that a service is experimental or investigational

If you have been denied coverage on the basis that the service is an experimental or investigational treatment, you must satisfy the following two (2) criteria:

- The service must otherwise be a Covered Service under this Subscriber Contract; and
- You must have received a final adverse determination through the Plan's internal appeal process and the Plan must have upheld the denial or you and the Plan must agree in writing to waive any internal appeal.

In addition, your attending physician must certify that you have a life-threatening or disabling condition or disease. A "life-threatening condition or disease" is one which, according to the current diagnosis of your attending physician, has a high probability of death. A "disabling condition or disease" is any medically determinable physical or mental impairment that can be expected to result in death, or that has lasted or can be expected to last for a continuous period of not less than twelve (12) months, which renders you unable to engage in any substantial gainful activities. In the case of a child under the age of eighteen, a "disabling condition or disease" is any medically determinable physical or mental impairment of comparable severity.

Your attending physician must also certify that your life-threatening or disabling condition or disease is one for which standard health services are ineffective or medically inappropriate or one for which there does not exist a more beneficial standard service or procedure covered by the Plan

or one for which there exists a clinical trial (as defined by law).

In addition, your attending physician must have recommended one of the following:

- A service, procedure or treatment that two (2) documents from available medical and scientific evidence indicate is likely to be more beneficial to you than any standard Covered Service (only certain documents will be considered in support of this recommendation – your attending physician should contact the State in order to obtain current information as to what documents will be considered acceptable); or
- A clinical trial for which you are eligible (only certain clinical trials can be considered).

For the purposes of this section, your attending physician must be a licensed, board-certified or board-eligible physician qualified to practice in the area appropriate to treat your life-threatening or disabling condition or disease.

4. The external appeal process

If, through the Plan's internal appeal process, you have received a final adverse determination upholding a denial of coverage on the basis that the service is not medically necessary or is an experimental or investigational treatment, you have four months from receipt of such notice to file a written request for an external appeal. If you and the Plan have agreed in writing to waive any internal appeal, you have four months from receipt of such waiver to file a written request for an external appeal. The Plan will provide an external appeal application with the final adverse determination issued through the Plan's internal appeal process or its written waiver of an internal appeal.

You may also request an external appeal application from New York State at 1-800-400-8882. Submit the completed application to the State Department of Insurance at the address indicated on the application. If you satisfy the criteria for an external appeal, the State will forward the request to a certified External Appeal Agent.

You will have the opportunity to submit additional documentation with your request. If the External Appeal Agent determines that the information you submit represents a material change from the information on which the Plan based its denial, the External Appeal Agent will share this information with the Plan in order for it to exercise its right to reconsider its decision. If the Plan chooses to exercise this right, the Plan will have three (3) business days to amend or confirm its decision. Please note that in the case of an expedited appeal (described below), the Plan does not have a right to reconsider its decision.

In general, the External Appeal Agent must make a decision within 30 days of receipt of your completed application. The External Appeal Agent may request additional information from you, your physician or the Plan. If the External Appeal Agent requests additional information, it will have five (5) additional business days to make its decision. The External Appeal Agent must notify you in writing of its decision within two (2) business days.

If your attending physician certifies that a delay in providing the service that has been denied poses an imminent or serious threat to your health, you may request an expedited external appeal. In that case, the External Appeal Agent must make a decision within three (3) days of receipt of your completed application. The External Appeal Agent must try to notify you and the Plan by telephone or facsimile immediately after reaching a decision.

If the External Appeal Agent overturns the Plan's decision that a service is not medically necessary or approves coverage of an experimental or investigational treatment, the Plan will provide coverage subject to the other terms and conditions of this Subscriber Contract. Please note that if the External Appeal Agent approves coverage of an experimental or investigational treatment that is part of a clinical trial, the Plan will only cover the costs of services required to provide treatment to you according to the design of the trial. The Plan shall not be responsible for the costs of investigational drugs or devices, the costs of non-health care services, the costs of managing research, or costs which would not be covered under this Subscriber Contract for non-experimental or non-investigational treatments provided in such clinical trial.

The External Appeal Agent's decision is binding on both you and the Plan. The External Appeal Agent's decision is admissible in any court proceeding.

5. Your responsibilities

It is your responsibility to initiate the external appeal process. You may initiate the external appeal process by filing a completed application with the New York State Department of Financial Services. You may appoint a representative to assist you with your external appeal request; however, the Department of Financial Services may contact you and request that you confirm in writing that you have appointed such representative.

Under New York State law, your completed request for appeal must be filed within four months of either the date upon which you receive written notification from the plan that it has upheld a denial of coverage, or the date upon which you receive a written waiver of any internal appeal, or the failure of the plan to adhere to claim processing requirements. The plan has no authority to grant an extension of this deadline.

Covered Services and Exclusions

In general, we don't cover experimental or investigational treatments; however, we shall cover an experimental or investigational treatment approved by an external appeal agent in accordance with Section of this Subscriber Contract. If the external appeal agent approves coverage of an experimental or investigational treatment that is part of a clinical trial, we will only cover the costs of services required to provide treatment to you according to the design of the trial. We shall not be responsible for the costs of investigational drugs or devices, the costs of non-health care services, the costs of managing research, or costs which would not be covered under this Subscriber Contract for nonexperimental or noninvestigational treatments provided in such clinical trial.

SECTION SEVENTEEN — UTILIZATION REVIEW

1. Utilization Review.

We review health services to determine whether the services are or were Medically Necessary or experimental or investigational ("Medically Necessary"). This process is called Utilization Review. Utilization Review includes all review activities, whether they take place prior to the service being performed (Preauthorization); when the service is being performed (concurrent); or after the services is performed (retrospective). If You have any questions about the Utilization Review process, please call 1-800-300-8181 (TTY: 711); the number on Your ID card. The toll-free telephone number is available at least 40 hours a week with an after-hours answering machine.

All determinations that services are not Medically Necessary will be made by: 1) licensed Physicians; or 2) licensed, certified, registered or credentialed Health Care Professionals who are in the same profession and same or similar specialty as the Provider who typically manages Your medical condition or disease or provides the health care service under review; or 3) with respect to substance use disorder treatment, effective on the date of issuance or renewal of the Contract; on or after April 1, 2015, licensed Physicians or licensed, certified, registered or credentialed Health Care Professionals who specialize in behavioral health and have experience in the delivery of substance use disorder courses of treatment. We do not compensate or provide financial incentives to Our employees or reviewers for determining that services are not Medically Necessary. We have developed guidelines and protocols to assist Us in this process. Specific guidelines and protocols are available for Your review upon request. For more information, call 1-800-300-8181 (TTY: 711); the number on Your ID card or visit Our website at www.empireblue.com/ny.

2. Preauthorization Reviews.

A. If We have all the information necessary to make a determination regarding a Preauthorization review, We will make a determination and provide notice to You (or Your designee) and Your Provider, by telephone and in writing, within three (3) business days or receipt of the request.

   If We need additional information, We will request it within three (3) business days. You or Your Provider will then have 45 calendar days to submit the information. If We receive the requested information within 45 days, We will make a determination and provide notice to You (or Your designee) and Your Provider, by telephone and in writing, within three (3) business days of Our receipt of the information. If all necessary information is not received within 45 days, We will make a determination within 15 calendar days of the end of the 45 day period.

A. **Urgent Preauthorization Reviews.** With respect to urgent Preauthorization requests, if We have all information necessary to make a determination, We will make a determination and provide notice to You (or Your designee) and Your Provider, by telephone, within 72 hours of receipt of the request. Written notice will be provided within three (3) business days of receipt of the request. If We need additional

information, We will request it within 24 hours. You or Your Provider will then have 48 hours to submit the information. We will make a determination and provide notice to You (or Your designee) and Your Provider by telephone and in writing within 48 hours of the earlier of Our receipt of the information or the end of the 48 hour time period.

3. **Concurrent Reviews.**

A. Utilization review decisions for services during the course of care (concurrent reviews) will be made, and notice provided to You (or Your designee) and Your Provider, by telephone and in writing, within one (1) business day of receipt of all necessary information. If We need additional information, We will request it within one (1) business day. You or Your Provider will then have 45 calendar days to submit the information. We will make a determination and provide notice to You (or Your designee) and Your Provider, by telephone and in writing, within one (1) business day of Our receipt of the information or, if We do not receive the information, within one (1) business day of the end of the 45-day time period.

B. **Urgent Concurrent Reviews.** For concurrent reviews that involve an extension of urgent care, if the request for coverage is made at least 24 hours prior to the expiration of a previously approved treatment, We will make a determination and provide notice to You (or Your designee) by telephone within 24 hours of receipt of the request. Written notice will be provided within one (1) business day of receipt of the request.

If the request for coverage is not made at least 24 hours prior to the expiration of a previously approved treatment and We have all the information necessary to make a determination, We will make a determination and provide written notice to You (or Your designee) within the earlier of 72 hours or one (1) business day of receipt of the request. If We need additional information, We will request it within 24 hours. You or Your Provider will then have 48 hours to submit the information. We will make a determination and provide written notice to You (or Your designee) within the earlier of one (1) business day or 48 hours of Our receipt of the information or, if we do not receive the information, within 48 hours of the end of the 48-hour time period.

C. Home Health Care Reviews. After receiving a request for coverage of home care services following an inpatient Hospital admission, We will make a determination and provide notice to You (or Your designee), by telephone and in writing, within one (1) business day of receipt of the necessary information. If the day following the request falls on a weekend or holiday, We will make a determination and provide notice to You (or Your designee) and Your Provider within 72 hours of receipt of the necessary information. When We receive a request for home care services and all necessary information prior to Your discharge from an inpatient hospital admission, We will not deny coverage for home care services while Our decision on the request is pending.

D. **Inpatient Substance Use Disorder Treatment Reviews.** Effective on the date of issuance or renewal of this Contract on or after April 1, 2015, if a request for inpatient substance use disorder treatment is submitted to Us at least 24 hours prior to discharge from an inpatient substance use disorder treatment admission, We will make a

determination within 24 hours of receipt of the request and We will provide coverage for the inpatient substance use disorder treatment while Our determination is pending.

4. **Retrospective Reviews.**

If We have all information necessary to make a determination regarding a retrospective claim, We will make a determination and notify You and Your Provider within 30 calendar days of the receipt of the request. If We need additional information, We will request it within 30 calendar days. You or Your Provider will then have 45 calendar days to provide the information. We will make a determination and provide notice to You and Your Provider in writing within 15 calendar days of the earlier of Our receipt of the information or the end of the 45-day period.

Once We have all the information to make a decision, Our failure to make a Utilization Review determination within the applicable time frames set forth above will be deemed an adverse determination subject to an internal Appeal.

5. Retrospective Review of Preauthorized Services.

We may only reverse a preauthorized treatment, service or procedure on retrospective review when:

- The relevant medical information presented to Us upon retrospective review is materially different from the information presented during the Preauthorization review;
- The relevant medical information presented to Us upon retrospective review existed at the time of the Preauthorization but was withheld or not made available to Us;
- We were not aware of the existence of such information at the time of the Preauthorization review; and
- Had We been aware of such information, the treatment, service or procedure being requested would not have been authorized. The determination is made using the same specific standards, criteria or procedures as used during the Preauthorization review.

6. Reconsideration.

If We did not attempt to consult with Your Provider before making an adverse determination, Your Provider may request reconsideration by the same clinical peer reviewer who made the adverse determination. For Preauthorization and concurrent reviews, the reconsideration will take place within one (1) business day of the request for reconsideration. If the adverse determination is upheld, a notice of adverse determination will be given to You and Your Provider, by telephone and in writing.

7. Utilization Review Internal Appeals.

You, Your designee, and, in retrospective review cases, Your Provider, may request an internal Appeal of an adverse determination, either by phone, in person or in writing.

You have up to 180 calendar days after You receive notice of the adverse determination to file an Appeal. We will acknowledge Your request for an internal Appeal within 15 calendar days of receipt. This acknowledgment will inform You of any additional information needed before a decision can be made. A clinical peer reviewer who is a Physician or a Health Care Professional in the same or similar specialty as the Provider who typically manages the disease or condition at issue and who is not subordinate to the clinical peer reviewer who made the initial adverse determination will perform the Appeal.

A. Out-of-Network Service Denial. Effective on the date of issuance or renewal of this Contract; on or after April 1, 2015, You also have the right to Appeal the denial of a Preauthorization request for an out-of-network health service when We determine that the out-of-network health service is not materially different from an available in-network health service. A denial of an out-of-network health service is a service provided by a Non-Participating Provider, but only when the service is not available from a Participating Provider. You are not eligible for a Utilization Review Appeal if the service You request is available from a Participating Provider, even if the Non-Participating Provider has more experience in diagnosing or treating Your condition. (Such an Appeal will be treated as a Grievance.) For a Utilization Review Appeal of denial of an out-of-network health service, You or Your designee must submit:

- A written statement from Your attending Physician, who must be a licensed, board-certified or board-eligible Physician qualified to practice in the specialty area of practice appropriate to treat Your condition, that the requested out-of-network health service is materially different from the alternate health service available from a Participating Provider that We approved to treat Your condition; and
- Two (2) documents from the available medical and scientific evidence that the out-of-network service: 1) is likely to be more clinically beneficial to You than the alternate in-network service; and 2) that the adverse risk of the out-of-network service would likely not be substantially increased over the in-network health service.

B. Out-of-Network Referral Denial. Effective on the date of issuance or renewal of this Contract on or after April 1, 2015, You also have the right to Appeal the denial of a request for an authorization to a Non-Participating Provider when We determine that We have a Participating Provider with the appropriate training and experience to meet Your particular health care needs who is able to provide the requested health care service. For a Utilization Review Appeal of an out-of-network referral denial, You or Your designee must submit a written statement from Your attending Physician, who must be a licensed, board-certified or board-eligible Physician qualified to practice in the specialty area of practice appropriate to treat Your condition:

- That the Participating Provider recommended by Us does not have the appropriate training and experience to meet Your particular health care needs for the health care service; and

- Recommending a Non-Participating Provider with the appropriate training and experience to meet Your particular health care needs who is able to provide the requested health care service.

8. **Standard Appeal.**

A. **Preauthorization Appeal.** If Your Appeal relates to a Preauthorization request, We will decide the Appeal within 30 calendar days of receipt of the Appeal request. Written notice of the determination will be provided to You (or Your designee), and where appropriate, Your Provider, within two (2) business days after the determination is made.

B. **Retrospective Appeal.** If Your Appeal relates to a retrospective claim, We will decide the Appeal within 30 calendar days of receipt of the Appeal request. Written notice of the determination will be provided to You (or Your designee), and where appropriate, Your Provider, within two (2) business days after the determination is made.

C. Expedited Appeal. An appeal of a review of continued or extended health care services, additional services rendered in the course of continued treatment, home health care services following discharge from an inpatient Hospital admission, services in which a Provider requests an immediate review, or any other urgent matter will be handled on an expedited basis. An expedited Appeal is not available for retrospective reviews. For an expedited Appeal, Your Provider will have reasonable access to the clinical peer reviewer assigned to the Appeal within one (1) business day of receipt of the request for an Appeal. Your Provider and a clinical peer reviewer may exchange information by telephone or fax. An expedited Appeal will be determined within the earlier of 72 hours of receipt of the Appeal or two (2) business days of receipt of the information necessary to conduct the Appeal.

If You are not satisfied with the resolution of Your expedited Appeal, You may file a standard internal Appeal or an external appeal.

Our failure to render a determination of Your Appeal within 60 calendar days of receipt of the necessary information for a standard Appeal or within two (2) business days of receipt of the necessary information for an expedited Appeal will be deemed a reversal of the initial adverse determination.

D. Substance Use Appeal. Effective on the date of issuance or renewal of this Contract; on or after April 1, 2015, if We deny a request for inpatient substance use disorder treatment that was submitted at least 24 hours prior to discharge from an inpatient admission, and You or Your Provider file an expedited internal Appeal of Our adverse determination, We will decide the Appeal within 24 hours of receipt of the Appeal request. If You or Your Provider file the expedited internal Appeal and an expedited external appeal within 24 hours of receipt of Our adverse determination, We will also provide coverage for the inpatient substance use disorder treatment while a determination on the internal Appeal and external Appeal is pending.

10. Appeal Assistance.

If You need Assistance filing an Appeal, You may contact the state independent Consumer Assistance Program at:
Community Health Advocates
633 3rd Ave. 10th Floor
New York, NY 10017

Or call toll free at 1-888-614-5400. You send an email to cha@cssny.org or visit the website at
www.communityhealthadvocates.org for more information.