



## MINISTRY OF HEALTH

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

### 1. WHAT IS A REFERRAL SYSTEM?

A referral system is a mechanism that enables a patient's health needs to be comprehensively managed using resources beyond those available at the location they access care from, be it in a community unit, dispensary, health centre or a higher level health facility.

### 2. WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF A REFERRAL SYSTEM?

The key importance of a referral system is that it ensures that all citizens have access to the highest possible standard of health irrespective of where they access care in the health system. A well-functioning referral system promotes linkages across the different levels of care in the public and private sector therefore ensuring that there is continuity of care for clients.

### 3. WHAT IS THE STRUCTURE OF THE REFERRAL SYSTEM IN KENYA?

The referral system links different levels of care, which is made up of 6 levels of care.

### 4. WHAT ARE THE 6 LEVELS OF CARE IN THE KENYAN HEALTH SYSTEM?

The first level comprises of community health services, which lies at the foundation of the health service delivery system. The second level provides primary care services and forms the interface between the community and the rest of the health system. The third level provides primary care services but with additional services such as basic inpatient services, including deliveries and includes facilities such as nursing homes and maternity centers. The fourth level forms the first level of hospitals and provides both inpatient and outpatient services. The fifth level offers a broad spectrum of specialized curative services, and together with level four, forms the county referral hospitals. The final level comprises of tertiary level hospitals whose services are highly specialized.

### 5. WHAT IS THE KENYA NATIONAL REFERRAL HEALTH STRATEGY?

This is the official document that will guide the strengthening process and the implementation of the referral system across all levels of care in Kenya. The document is guided by the Millennium Development Goals and the Kenya Health Policy (2012 – 2030).

### 6. WHAT IS THE SCOPE OF THE REFERRAL STRATEGY IN KENYA?

The Referral Strategy deals with the management of four key movements. The first is the client movement, which is the



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movement of the actual patient who is seeking an appropriate level of care at which their health needs are best addressed. The second is the expertise movement, which involves the system of rotation and facilitation of healthcare providers so that they are able to reach patients in need of care, and especially in situation where it may be more efficient and cost effective. The third is the specimen movement, which involves the movement of a sample, i.e. urine, blood, etc. usually for investigative purposes. The final one is the client parameters movement, which is an indirect referral involving the movement of the patient's information for supportive diagnosis to higher levels of the system. The development in the information technology sector directly facilitates the latter form of referral.

## **7. WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF AN EFFECTIVE REFERRAL SYSTEM?**

By creating a comprehensive, harmonized, effective referral system, the government will ensure that care is provided at the minimum possible cost, whilst promoting universal coverage for all citizens, safeguarding continuity of care across different levels of care, and ensuring efficient collaboration and coordination amongst health facilities at both the national and county levels.

## **8. WHAT ARE THE HEALTH SECTOR REFERRAL GUIDELINES?**

The referral guidelines are formal advisory statements to guide health workers on the management of referral processes including referral communication, documentation and coordination. The referral guidelines also outline the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders in the referral system.

## **9. WHY ARE THE HEALTH SECTOR REFERRAL GUIDELINES IMPORTANT?**

Previously, the lack of a formal guiding document on how referral should be conducted has created a number of challenges for the healthcare structure in Kenya. These systematic challenges include inappropriate referral practices, poor communication of referrals, poor relationships between providers among other challenges that cause delays in the delivery of quality health care to patients. .

## **10. WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR MAKING THE REFERRAL SYSTEM A SUCCESS?**

All key stakeholders in the health industry have to play their part in order to establish a well-functioning referral system. These stakeholders include the Ministry of Health at both the national and county levels, both private and public health facilities across the various levels, health providers and patients.

