

Provider Bulletin

Molina Healthcare of Washington, Inc.

May 20, 2026

Proper Billing for Molecular & Comprehensive Laboratory Panels (Medicaid)

Molina of Washington, Inc. would like to reinforce proper billing requirements for molecular diagnostic testing, including comprehensive and multiplex laboratory panels, to help reduce claim denials and ensure compliance.

When a panel CPT code accurately represents the test performed, providers must bill the single, most comprehensive code rather than billing individual items included in the panel separately. Billing multiple CPT codes to represent one panel test is considered unbundling and may result in denials.

Example of Improper Billing Practice: Panel Testing of CPT® 87798

A provider performs a **multi-organism molecular panel test** (e.g., respiratory, STI, or gastrointestinal panel) and bills **multiple units of CPT® 87798**—one for each organism included in the panel—even when:

- The panel has a **single comprehensive CPT® code** that should have been reported instead

In this scenario, the provider:

- Uses CPT® 87798 repeatedly for **common, well-defined organisms** (e.g., Chlamydia, Gonorrhea, SARS-CoV-2) despite the existence of **more specific CPT® codes**
- Bills CPT® 87798 for tests that are **already included in a panel code**, resulting in **unbundling**
- Submits claims for molecular testing without **clearly documented medical necessity** supporting each individual organism tested

Guidance:

- **Do not report individual component or substitute molecular tests** when a comprehensive molecular panel has been performed. Per AMA CPT coding guidelines, the panel code must be billed as inclusive of all component testing.
- **Submit only the appropriate comprehensive panel code** that accurately reflects the services rendered.
- **Verify Prior Authorization requirements prior to rendering and billing services.**
 - For example, **CPT 87798 requires prior authorization.**
 - Ensure authorization is obtained and supporting clinical documentation is complete and available at the time of submission.