

**AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ORTHOPAEDIC  
SURGEONS**

**GUIDELINE PROCESS PROCEDURE  
FOR EXTERNAL REVIEW PROCESS**

## **EXTERNAL REVIEW PROCESS**

### **1.0 PURPOSE**

The purpose of this document is to outline the external review process which includes peer review and public commentary.

### **2.0 SCOPE**

This procedure applies to all guidelines developed by the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons Guidelines Unit. This procedure is also applicable to the physician workgroups, committee members, and council members who anchor the development process.

### **3.0 RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 3.1 The CPG Manager or the assigned designee is responsible for soliciting outside specialty societies, the AAOS Board of Specialty Societies and Board of Counselors for participation in the peer review and public commentary processes respectively. (See Appendix I and II)
- 3.2 AAOS staff is responsible for sending the guideline and all supporting documentation to the Guidelines Oversight Committee and the Evidence-Based Practice Committee and, when applicable, any other AAOS entity as needed for peer review.
- 3.3 Peer reviewers and public commentators have thirty days to provide written responses for the review.
- 3.4 The CPG manager drafts responses to peer reviewers on a point-by-point basis to the non-editorial comments provided. The draft responses are then reviewed, supplemented and approved by the Work Group Chair and Vice-Chair.
- 3.5 The CPG manager responds to public commentators supplying comments with a letter thanking them for participating. If comments by a public commentator also initiate changes in the guideline, they also receive a response detailing the changes made to the guideline as a result of their input.
- 3.6 The guideline work group chair and vice-chair are responsible for approving the final peer review responses. The response to peer review must be sent prior to forwarding the guideline and supporting documentation for public commentary.
- 3.7 The AAOS Director of Research must approve all changes to this procedure. (see section 11.0 Chain of Approval)

### **4.0 APPLICATION**

- 4.1 The intent of these processes is to insure feedback from all relevant stakeholders as well as to ensure a timely approval process for the guideline.

## **5.0 REFERENCES**

- 5.1 Solicitation letters (G:\GUIDELINES\GENERAL\Peer Review and Public Commentary Process)
- 5.2 AAOS Process Procedure Timelines (Appendix I and II)

## **6.0 SUMMARY OF METHODS**

- 6.1 Solicitation for peer reviewers from outside specialty organizations begins approximately six weeks prior to the final guideline recommendation meeting. Solicitation is completed using a letter written on behalf of the AAOS Guidelines Oversight Chair outlining the request and the guideline(s) to be reviewed as well as an approximate timeline. Outside specialty organizations may receive up to three sets of CDs containing the guideline and all supporting documents.
- 6.2 Peer reviewers expressing interest in reviewing the guideline will have thirty days to supply comments for a guideline. In addition, all members of the AAOS GOC and EBPC receive the guideline at this time.
- 6.3 The CPG manager drafts initial responses to peer reviewers which are submitted to the work group chair and vice-chair for review, edits, and approval. Upon approval, changes are made to the final document and peer reviewers are notified of the changes made to the draft as a result of their peer review.
- 6.4 The final draft and responses to peer review are submitted for public commentary. The AAOS Board of Directors and Council on Research and Quality also receive the document for review at the beginning of the period of public comment.
- 6.5 Following public commentary, the CPG manager drafts a letter detailing the changes made to the guideline as a result of public commentary. The CPG manager also sends a letter thanking all public commentators for participating in the process.
- 6.6 The CPG manager forwards the confidential draft sequentially to the AAOS GOC, EBPC, Council on Research and Quality and BOD for approval.

## **7.0 APPLICABLE SOFTWARE**

- 7.1 Microsoft Office (Word, Outlook) 2003

## **8.0 ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENTS**

- 8.1 The solicitation process must begin six weeks prior to the final guideline recommendation meeting.
- 8.2 The draft guideline must be completed on schedule.

- 8.3 The outside specialty organizations must respond with contact information for their selected peer reviewers.
- 8.4 Creation of peer review/public commentary packets requires blank CDs and a computer with a CD burner.

## **9.0 PRECAUTIONS**

- 9.1 The peer review and public commentary timeline is fixed and begins six weeks before a guideline's final meeting. Failure to adhere to timeline parameters can result in delaying the projected guideline release date.
- 9.2 It is critical that all documentation during the peer review/public commentary process is retained (electronically and hard copy).

## **10.0 PROCEDURE**

### **10.1 Peer Review**

- 10.1.1 The CPG Manager drafts a solicitation letter on behalf of the AAOS Guidelines Oversight Chairperson. The solicitation letter should include an approximate date AAOS expects the guideline draft to be available.
- 10.1.2 AAOS staff sends a copy of the solicitation letter to the Executive Director, President and first vice-president of all specialty societies (if this contact information can be garnered).
- 10.1.3 The CPG Manager solicits outside specialty organizations for peer review representatives and their contact information approximately six weeks prior to the final meeting. They must provide the following:
  - 10.1.3.1 The name (s) of the person who will review the guideline for their organization.
  - 10.1.3.2 The contact information for their peer reviewer including address, phone number and email address.
  - 10.1.3.3 Any additional contact information (organization staff that should also be notified and copied on correspondence.)
- 10.1.4 Specialty societies may provide up to three reviewers for a single guideline.
- 10.1.5 AAOS sends no more than three CDs to any outside specialty organization.
- 10.1.6 Outside specialty societies have two weeks to reply with peer reviewer names and contact information if they wish to participate in the peer review of a guideline.

- 10.1.7 AAOS staff notifies GOC and EBPC members via email that they will receive the CD for peer review and should retain the CD for reference during the approval process when the draft is approved by the work group. This provides GOC and EBPC members with approximately two months to review the guideline and all supporting materials prior to being asked to approve the documents.
- 10.1.8 AAOS staff notifies all peer reviewers (GOC, EBPC, representatives of outside specialty societies and, when applicable, any other AAOS entities reviewing the guideline) by email the day Federal Express packages are forwarded to them with the guideline. Note: GOC and EBPC Members will not be shipped a CD; rather the guideline will be made available to them via the AAOS SharePoint portal.
- 10.1.9 AAOS staff retains all Fed Ex tracking forms forwarded by AAOS copy services.
- 10.1.10 AAOS staff tracks all correspondence during the peer review process (correspondence from members and outside specialty organizations) in hard copy.
- 10.1.11 AAOS staff retains this information in a dedicated binder for peer review and public commentary for each guideline. This information includes but is not limited to:
- All email correspondence with members and outside specialty societies.
  - All questions asked and all answers provided to outside specialty organizations concerning AAOS guideline development processes.
  - The contact information for all peer reviewer names that are submitted.
- 10.1.12 All reviewers have thirty days to respond to peer review with comments. The timeframe is coordinated with the date of completion of the approval process needed for BOD approval.
- 10.1.13 The CPG manager drafts an initial response to all peer reviewer comments within four to eight weeks following the deadline for peer reviewers to return their responses.
- 10.1.14 The work group chair, vice-chair and oversight chairs review, edit and approve the initial responses drafted by the CPG manager. This review and approval takes no longer than two to three weeks.
- 10.1.15 Following the response to peer review, AAOS staff makes all agreed upon changes to the draft document.

10.1.16 The CPG Manager or appropriate designee updates the document control number on the draft.

10.1.17 The CPG Manager forwards the peer review comments, peer review responses and the edited draft for public commentary.

10.1.18 See Appendix I and II

## **10.2 Public Commentary**

10.2.1 At the time the draft guideline is sent for peer review, the CPG Manager or designee solicits the AAOS Board of Specialties (BOS) and Board of Councilor (BOC) members to see if they are interested in participating in public commentary of a draft guideline. This process potentially allows 185 members to review the draft guideline.

10.2.2 Member responses and all correspondence are retained in hard copy in the binder designated for peer review and public commentary of the guideline.

10.2.3 Members who respond that they would like to participate in public commentary receive the guideline, evidence report and a letter outlining the deadline date for all responses. Responses should be returned by email.

10.2.4 The Council on Research and Quality and Board of Directors receive a CD with the guideline, all supporting documentation and peer review comments with responses at this time.

10.2.5 The Council and BOD also receive an explanatory letter outlining the final deadline for commentary responses.

10.2.6 At the end of public commentary the CPG Manager catalogs all non-editorial comments, drafts a response and forwards the responses to the WGC, WGVC and OC for review, edits and approval.

10.2.7 At the end of the period of public commentary, all members who participated in public commentary receive a form letter thanking them for their participation and identifying any additional changes made to the draft as a result of public commentary.

10.2.8 This form letter should be sent within one month of the deadline for responses to public commentary.

10.2.9 The CPG Manager forwards the confidential draft and an itemized list of all changes made as a result of the review process, sequentially to the GOC, EBPC, Council on Research and Quality and BOD for approval.

## **11.0 CHAIN OF APPROVAL**

Approved By:  
Charles M. Turkelson Ph.D.  
AAOS Director of Research and Scientific Affairs

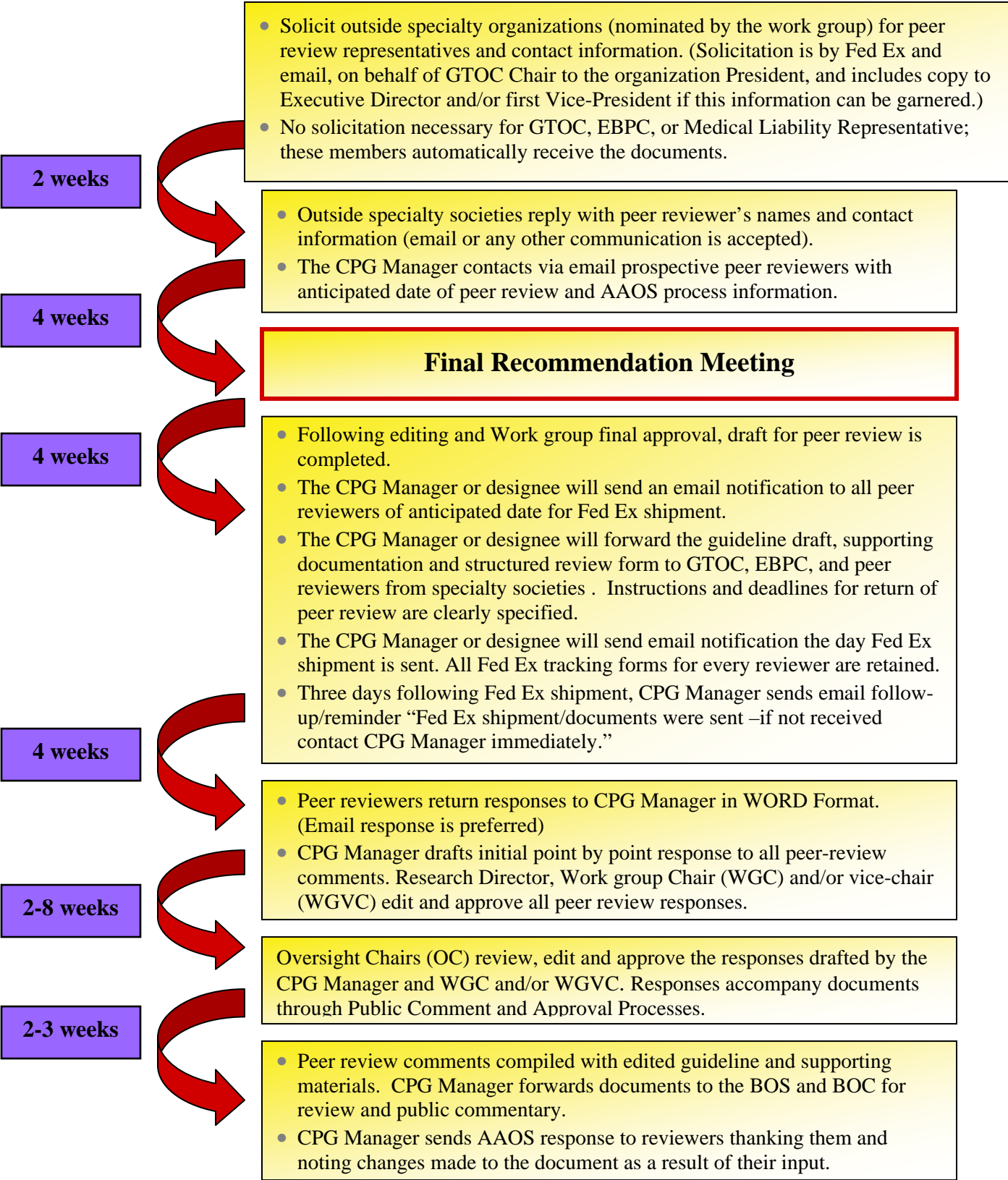
Janet L. Wies MPH  
AAOS Clinical Practice Guidelines Manager

**Signatures available upon request.**

## **APPENDIX I: PEER REVIEW PROCESS TIMELINE**

**Peer Review**  
**Initiated 6 weeks before Final Recommendation Meeting**

*All documentation is retained in the AAOS Research Department and available from the CPG Manager upon written request.*

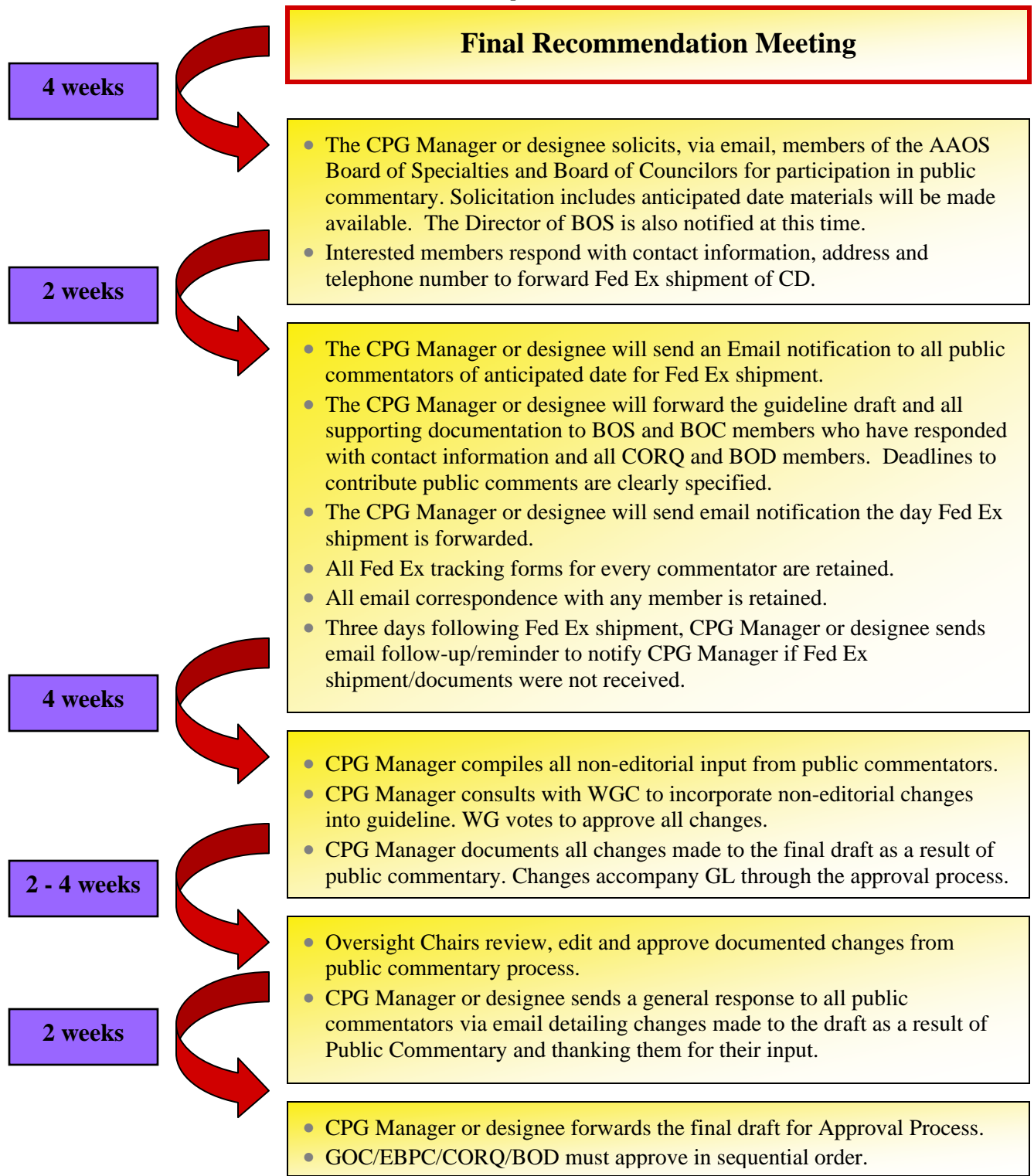


**Timeline Total: 18 – 25 Weeks**

## **APPENDIX II: PUBLIC COMMENTARY PROCESS TIMELINE**

**Public Commentary Timeline**  
**Initiated 4 weeks after Final Recommendation Meeting (when the guideline draft is submitted for peer review).**

*All documentation is retained in the AAOS Research Department and available from the CPG Manager upon written request.*



**Timeline Total: 12 – 19 Weeks**