

Home Health Care

In General

A home health agency is a public agency or private organization that is primarily engaged in providing skilled nursing care and other therapeutic services. Examples of home health agencies are visiting nurse associations, official health agencies, and hospital-based home care programs.

To qualify for home health benefits, a covered person must be confined to his home under the care of a physician, in need of skilled nursing services on an intermittent basis, or in need of physical or speech therapy. A plan of care must be established by the physician and periodically reviewed by such physician. The services must be furnished by a home health agency or by others under an arrangement with a home health agency on a visiting basis. There is a limit to the number of visits an individual may receive under this benefit. The convalescent care benefits, like the home health benefits, require that an individual had to be previously hospitalized.

Services Provided

- Part-time or intermittent nursing care provided by or under the supervision of a registered professional nurse
- Physical, occupational, or speech therapy
- Medical social services under the direction of a physician
- Part-time or intermittent services of a home health aide who has successfully completed an approved training program
- Medical supplies (other than drugs and biologicals) and durable medical equipment
- Medical services of interns and residents-in-training under an approved teaching program of a hospital with which the agency is affiliated
- Any of the foregoing items and services which (a) are provided on an outpatient basis under arrangements made by the home health agency at a hospital or skilled nursing facility, or a rehabilitation center, and (b) involve the use of equipment which cannot readily be made available to the individual in his place of residence, or which are furnished at the facility while such individual is there to receive items or services involving the *use* of such equipment (but transportation to the facility is excluded).

Participant Must Be Under Care of A Physician

Items and services must be furnished to a covered person who is under the care of a physician. This physician may be the patient's private physician; or, a physician on the staff of the home health agency; or, a physician working under an arrangement with the

institution which is the patient's residence; or, if the agency is hospital-based, a physician on the hospital or agency staff.

The attending physician establishes the plan of treatment and also certifies to the necessity for home health services.

Home Health Care Plan Of Care

Items and services must be furnished under a plan established and periodically reviewed by a physician and which relates the items and services to the patient's condition. Before the plan is established, the agency is required to make an evaluation visit in order to consider the physical facilities available to the patient's home, attitudes of family members, and the availability of family members to help in the care of the patient. A plan must be reduced to writing by the physician and made available to the home health agency which has accepted the patient as a client, or the home health agency itself may make a written record of the physician's oral orders. In the latter situation, the agency forwards its written record to the physician who signs and returns the record to the agency. The date the agency puts the plan of treatment into writing should be recorded.

Patient Confined To Home

The patient must be physician-certified to be homebound. An individual does not have to be bedridden to be considered home-confined. However, the condition of these patients should be such that there exists a normal inability to leave home and, consequently, leaving their homes would require a considerable and taxing effort. If the patient does in fact leave the home, the patient may nevertheless be considered homebound if the absences from the home are infrequent or for periods of relatively short duration. It is expected that in most instances absences from the home which occur will be for the purpose of receiving medical treatment. However, occasional absences from the home for nonmedical purposes, e.g., an occasional trip to the barber, a walk around the block, or a drive, would not necessitate a finding that the individual is not homebound so long as the absences are undertaken on an infrequent basis or are of relatively short duration and do not indicate that the patient has the capacity to obtain the health care provided outside rather than in the home.

Specific Services

Nursing Care

Skilled nursing care is a covered home health service and is reimbursable provided that all of the following conditions are met:

- The services are ordered by and included in the plan of treatment established by the physician for the patient.
- The services are required on an intermittent basis.

- The services are performed by or under the direct supervision of a licensed nurse to assure the safety of the patient and to achieve the medically desired result (but see below for an exception in the case of services by student nurses).
- The services are reasonable and necessary to the treatment of an illness or injury.

Therapy

Physical, speech, and occupational therapy furnished by the home health agency, or by others under an arrangement with and under the supervision of such an agency, are covered home health services.

Medical Social Services

Medical social services are those social services that contribute significantly to the treatment of a patient's medical condition. Medical social services are covered if they are prescribed by a physician and included in the patient's plan of treatment. The services must, in the physician's professional judgment, be needed because social problems exist which are or will be an impediment to the effective treatment of the patient's medical condition or his rate of recovery.

Services of a Home Health Aide

The primary function of a home health aide is the personal care of a patient. The services of a home health aide are given under the supervision of a registered professional nurse and, if appropriate, a physical, speech, or occupational therapist. The assignment of a home health aide to a particular case must be made in accordance with a written plan of treatment established by a physician that indicates the patient's need for personal care services. The specific personal care services to be provided by the home health aide must be determined by a registered professional nurse and not by the home health aide.

Personal care duties that may be performed by a home health aide includes assistance in the activities of daily living, e.g., helping the patient to bathe, to get in and out of bed, to care for his hair and teeth, to exercise, and to take medications specifically ordered by a physician that are ordinarily self-administered, and retraining the patient in necessary self-help skills.

Sample activities in home health care of Home Health Aide are as follows:

1. Supervising ADL (Activities of Daily Living)
2. Encouraging patient in self-help
3. Following through on use of special equipment
4. Turning and positioning patients
5. Assisting with ambulation
6. Assisting/encouraging patient to follow exercise program
7. Assisting with ROM (Range of Motion) exercises
8. Assisting patient to chair, bed or commode

9. Giving bedpan and urinal
10. Assisting/giving bath
11. Measuring and recording intake and output
12. Giving back rubs
13. Providing oral hygiene, including care of dentures
14. Providing care of the hair
15. Changing bed linen
16. Taking and recording temperature
17. Changing simple dressing (non-sterile)
18. Preparing simple meals following dietary instructions
19. Assisting with eating
20. Maintaining required records
21. Informing physician of any change in patient's condition or family situation
22. Maintaining clean and neat environment
23. Accompanying patient outside the home when permitted
24. Safeguarding equipment and supplies
25. Providing or assisting with post mortem care
26. Assisting patient with prescribed medications that are ordinarily self-administered
27. Testing urine for sugar or acetone.

The Home Health Aide, with additional training and proven performance, may assist with certain procedures. Home Health Care agencies will usually provide additional training for these extra services. Only Home Health Aides with documented skill in performing these functions may:

1. Take and record blood pressures
2. Give premeasured packaged enemas
3. Treat decubitus ulcers
4. Irrigate well regulated colostomies
5. Administer oxygen by cannula or mask
6. Give gastrostomy tube feedings
7. Apply hot water bottles
8. Apply ice bags
9. Insert rectal tubes
10. Apply binders and Ace bandages.

A Home Health aide **may not:**

1. Administer medications
2. Irrigate urinary catheters
3. Give nasogastric tube feedings
4. Perform any duties or procedures which require the skill or education of a licensed nurse.

Medical Supplies and Equipment

Medical supplies are items which, due to their therapeutic or diagnostic characteristics, are essential in enabling home health agency personnel to carry out effectively the care which the physician has ordered for the treatment or diagnosis of the patient's illness or injury. Certain items which, by their very nature, are designed only to serve a medical purpose are obviously considered to be medical supplies, e.g., catheters, needles, syringes, surgical dressings and materials used in aseptic techniques. Other medical supplies include, but are not limited to, irrigating solutions; techniques. Other medical supplies include, but are not limited to, irritating solutions, intravenous fluids, and oxygen.

Drugs and biologicals are excluded from coverage items or services administered by home health agencies.

Services of Interns

Home health services include the medical services of interns and residents-in-training under an approved hospital teaching program (if the agency has an affiliation with or is under common control of a hospital providing medical services).

Outpatient Services

Outpatient services include any items or services which are provided under arrangements on an outpatient basis at a hospital, skilled nursing facility, rehabilitation center, or outpatient department affiliated with a medical school, and (a) which require equipment which cannot readily be made available at the patient's place of residence, or (b) which are furnished while he is at the facility to receive the services. The hospital, skilled nursing facility, or outpatient provider. The cost of transportation of an individual to a facility cannot be reimbursed as a home health service.

Limitations of Coverage

Excluded services include the following:

- Services or items which would not be paid for if provided to an inpatient of a hospital, such as private duty nursing service or items of comfort which are not necessary for treatment, e.g., television
- Meals-on-wheels or similar food service arrangements
- Transportation services, e.g., from place of residence to a facility to receive home health services on an outpatient basis
- Drugs and biologicals
- Services of a social worker
- Services related to a pregnancy.

Visits

A visit is a personal contact in the patient's place of residence made for the purpose providing a covered service by a health worker on the staff of the home health agency or by others under contract or arrangement with the home health agency; or a visit by a patient on an outpatient basis to a hospital, skilled nursing facility, rehabilitation center, or outpatient department affiliated with a medical school when arrangements have been made by the home health agency for one or more of the covered services.

The Schedule of Benefits sets forth the limitation of the number of visits both per day and per Benefit Year.

Reimbursement

The benefits payable will be reimbursement of reasonable and customary charges.

Checklist

An examiner checklist for the home health care services is as follows:

- Is the level of care provided necessary?
- Is the care being provided custodial?
- Is an RN really providing the care?
- Are the hours of care billed actually provided?
- Are other charges being built into the hourly rate such as overtime, mileage, etc.?
- Were the nursing notes written *after* being requested?
- Might an LPN have provided the same services at a reduced cost?
- Is RN care provided simply to meet plan provisions?
- Are unused or unneeded equipment or supplies being filed?

Summary of Home Health Care Professional Service

Skilled Nursing

- Skilled Observation and Assessment
- Foley Insertion
- Bladder Instillation
- Open Wound Care/Dressing
- Decubitus Care
- Venipuncture
- Restorative Nursing
- Post Cataract Care
- Bowel/Bladder Training
- Chest Physio (Inc. Postural drainage)
- Adm. of Vitamin B/12

- Adm. Insulin
- Adm. IV's/Clysis
- Other (Spec. under orders)
- Incision/Suture Line
- Management and Evaluation of Patient Care Plan
- Teach Ostomy or Ileo
- Conduit Care
- Teach Nasogastric Feeding
- Reinsertion Nasogastric Feeding Tube
- Teach Gastrostomy Feeding
- Teach Parenteral Nutrition
- Teach Care of Trach
- Adm. Care of Trach
- Teach Inhalation Rx
- Adm. Inhalation Rx
- Teach Adm. of Injection
- Teach Diabetic Care
- Disimpaction/F.U. Enema
- Wound Care/Dressing-Closed
- Teaching Care of Any Indwelling Catheter
- Teaching and Training (other, spec. under order).

Physical Therapy

- Evaluation
- Therapeutic Exercise
- Transfer Training
- Home Program
- Gait Training
- Chest Physiotherapy
- Ultrasound
- Electro Therapy
- Prosthetic Training
- Fabrication Temporary Devices
- Muscle Re-education
- Management and Evaluation of a Patient Care Plan.

Speech Therapy

- Evaluation
- Voice Disorders Treatments
- Speech Articulation Disorders Treatments
- Dysphagia Treatments

- Aural Rehabilitation
- Nonoral Communication
- Other (Specify under Orders)
- Language Disorders Treatments.

Occupational Therapy

- Evaluation
- Independent Living/Daily Living Skills (ADL Training)
- Muscle Re-education
- Perceptual Motor Training
- Fine Motor Coordination
- Neuro-development Training
- Sensory Treatment
- Orthotics/Splinting
- Adaptive Equipment (fabrication and training).

Home Health Aide

- Tub/Shower Bath
- Partial/Complete Bed Bath
- Personal Care
- Catheter Care
- Wash Clothes
- Assist with Ambulation
- Exercises
- Prepare Meal
- Grocery Shop
- Housekeeping.