

Medicare Home Health Benefit for Caregiver Training in 16 States

New policy: On Oct. 24, 2005, a new policy provided guidance on Medicare payment for home health nurses to provide teaching and training for families and other caregivers of Medicare beneficiaries with Alzheimer's disease and behavioral symptoms.

Where: The new policy was effective in 16 states:

- Alabama
- Arkansas
- Florida
- Georgia
- Illinois
- Indiana
- Kentucky
- Louisiana
- Mississippi
- New Mexico
- North Carolina
- Ohio
- Oklahoma
- South Carolina
- Tennessee
- Texas

The policy was the result of a local coverage determination by Palmetto GBA, the Medicare Regional Home Health and Hospice Intermediary for these 16 states.

Purpose of the new policy: Medicare allows a specific category of skilled nursing care called "teaching and training activities." The new policy recognized that families and other caregivers of Medicare beneficiaries with Alzheimer's disease and behavioral symptoms may need help in learning how to manage behavioral symptoms. It describes how the "teaching and training activities" category can be used by home health nurses to help families and other caregivers learn to manage the person's behavioral symptoms.

How to access the services: In general, Medicare pays for home health care for Medicare beneficiaries who are confined to home and require skilled nursing care and other specified services. The teaching and training services for families and other caregivers of beneficiaries with Alzheimer's disease and behavioral symptoms can be provided by a home health agency under a plan of care written by the beneficiary's doctor. People with Alzheimer's disease, their families and other caregivers should see the beneficiary's doctor to access these and other Medicare home health care services.

Case examples: On its Web site, Palmetto GBA provides two case scenarios that illustrate how the policy can be used. One example describes a woman with moderate Alzheimer's who is unable to bathe and groom herself. Her daughter is frustrated because she feels her mother is "uncooperative." Medicare coverage for teaching and training services are justified in this case because the services can help maintain hygiene and skin care.

The second example describes a woman with Alzheimer's who is losing weight and does not stay seated during meals. Her niece believes she is "trying to be difficult." Teaching and training services are justified because the services can help maintain adequate nutrition.

More information: Detailed information about the policy is on the Palmetto GBA Web site, <http://www.palmettogba.com>. Once on Palmetto GBA's home page:

- Select Regional Home Health & Hospice Intermediary (RHHI) under the Medicare Services – Providers heading.
- Then select Medical Policies – Active.
- Scroll down to the LCD titled Home Health Skilled Nursing Care: Teaching and Training: Alzheimer's Disease and Behavioral Disturbances.
- Click on that entry and follow the directions on the screen to view the policy. Electronic links to the case examples and response to comments document appear under the heading "Related Documents" near the end of the policy.

References

See the Alzheimer's Association Medicare topic sheet, "Fee-For-Service Medicare for People with Alzheimer's Disease," for more information about Medicare home health care.

The Alzheimer's Association is the leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer care, support and research.

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