Medicare home health benefit for caregiver training in 16 states

Sixteen Southern and Midwestern states feature the Medicare policy: “Home Health Skilled Nursing Care — Teaching and Training: Alzheimer’s Disease and Behavioral Disturbances.” This policy guides Medicare coverage for home health nurses to teach and train families and other caregivers on Alzheimer’s disease and related behavioral symptoms.

The policy is effective in the following 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 administrative contractor for home health and hospice claims for these 16 states.

Purpose of the policy
Medicare allows a specific category of skilled nursing care called “teaching and training activities.” The policy recognizes that families and other caregivers of those with Alzheimer’s disease 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.

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
In addition to the local coverage policy, Palmetto GBA developed 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

- Select Advanced Search.
- Then select Local Coverage Documents.
- Click on Final Policies.
- Under Select Contractor Type, click on the HHH MAC.
- Under Keyword, type in “home health” and click the Search button.
- Scroll down to the policy titled: “Home Health Skilled Nursing Care: Teaching and Training: Alzheimer’s Disease and Behavioral Disturbances.”

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.

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