

Corrections & Clarifications

Professional



Policy change for physical medicine therapy services clarified

In the February 2006 *Record* (Page 31), we announced that effective for dates of service on or after Feb. 1, 2007, BCBSM is aligning with Medicare's policy on reimbursing outpatient physical medicine therapy services provided "incident to" physician or nonphysician practitioner services, as defined by CMS. These services include physical therapy, occupational therapy and speech and language pathology therapy. This policy applies to all outpatient settings, including physician offices, independent physical therapist offices, hospital outpatient departments and outpatient physical therapy facilities.

For this benefit, BCBSM defines "physician" as a doctor of medicine, osteopathy, podiatry or dentistry, and a "nonphysician practitioner" is a physician's assistant, clinical nurse specialist or nurse practitioner.

The following chart provides a summary of BCBSM's policy change:

| Location | Providers who can perform covered services | Providers who cannot perform covered services |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| Physician office | Physician or nonphysician practitioner, physical therapist, occupational therapist, speech therapist, physical therapy assistant or athletic trainer supervised by physical therapist, occupational therapy assistant or athletic trainer supervised by occupational therapist | All locations: therapy aides, exercise physiologists, kinesiotherapists, low-vision specialists or other individuals |
| Outpatient physical therapy facility | Physical therapist, occupational therapist, speech therapist, physical therapy assistant or athletic trainer supervised by physical therapist, occupational therapy assistant or athletic trainer supervised by occupational therapist | |
| Outpatient hospital | Physical therapist, occupational therapist, speech therapist, physical therapy assistant or athletic trainer supervised by physical therapist, occupational therapy assistant or athletic trainer supervised by occupational therapist | |
| Independent physical therapist office | Independent physical therapist, physical therapy assistant supervised by the independent physical therapist, athletic trainer supervised by the independent physical therapist | |

To further clarify the February article, BCBSM only covers services rendered by qualified providers. In Michigan, physical therapists must be licensed and occupational therapists must be registered by the state. Speech therapists must be certified through the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. A physical therapy assistant must have an associate's degree from an accredited physical therapy assistant program. Certified occupational therapy assistants must be registered with the state of Michigan. Athletic trainers must be licensed. PTAs are not regulated in Michigan.

BCBSM does not enroll or issue provider identification numbers to the following:

- Occupational therapists
- Speech therapists
- Physical therapy assistants
- Occupational therapy assistants
- Athletic trainers
- Physical therapy aides

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MEDICINE THERAPY continued from Page 2

ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS CLARIFIED

We would like to explain which providers are eligible to perform physical medicine covered services, the providers who are reimbursed for physical medicine services and location of services.

BCBSM will follow the CMS rule and reimburse providers for physical medicine services "incident to" physician or nonphysician practitioner services in the outpatient setting when such services are performed by the physician, nonphysician practitioner, licensed physical therapist, registered occupational therapist or certified speech and language pathology therapist employed by the physician or facility. A physician or NPP may also bill for services provided by a physical therapy assistant or an athletic trainer if directly supervised by a physical therapist. The same goes for services performed by an occupational therapy assistant or an athletic trainer if such services are directly supervised by an occupational therapist.

BCBSM will no longer reimburse physicians or NPPs for these "incident to" physical medicine services when they directly supervise physical therapy assistants, occupational therapy assistants, athletic trainers, therapy aides, exercise

physiologists, kinesiotherapists, low-vision specialists or other individuals.

However, BCBSM's rules will differ from those of CMS, in two aspects:

- BCBSM will reimburse independent physical therapists for services only when they are performed by the IPT, or by a physical therapist assistant or an athletic trainer under the supervision of the IPT, when the services are provided in the IPT's office. A physical therapist who is employed by a physician will not be directly reimbursed for services under an independent physical therapist PIN. In addition, physical therapy performed by therapy aides, exercise physiologists, kinesiotherapists, low-vision specialists or other individuals will not be eligible for BCBSM reimbursement.
- Physicians, NPPs, IPTs and facilities will be allowed to bill for services of athletic trainers when such services are directly supervised by a physical therapist or occupational therapist.

*For more information, please contact Provider Inquiry. **

CLARIFICATION

Certified nurse practitioners may prescribe DME/P&O

In the July 2005 *Record* (Page 37) we announced that effective Jan, 1, 2005, certified nurse practitioners were an approved provider type to prescribe durable medical equipment, prosthetic and orthotics.

This policy change does not apply to DaimlerChrysler, Delphi, Ford, General Motors and Siemens. These groups still require DME/P&O orders to be prescribed by physicians only.

We would like to clarify that CNPs are eligible to write prescriptions for members with DME & P&O benefits.

*For more information, please contact Provider Inquiry. **