



Frequently Asked Questions Face-to-face Encounter for Home Health Care

Face-to-Face Encounter

Q: What must be included in the content of Physician Certification of Home Health Services?

A: Under both the hospital insurance and the supplementary medical insurance programs, no payment can be made for covered home health services that a home health agency provides unless a physician certifies that:

- x The home health services are because the individual is confined to his/her home and needs intermittent skilled nursing care, physical therapy and/or ~~speech~~ ~~language~~ pathology services, or continues to need occupational therapy;
- x A plan for furnishing such services to the individual has been established and is periodically reviewed by a physician; and
- x The services are or were furnished while the individual was under the care of a physician.

Q: Is there a standard CMS form for the certification documentation?

Q: What is an example of an acceptable narrative on the face-to-face documentation?

A: "The patient is temporarily homebound secondary to status post total knee replacement and currently walker dependent with painful ambulation. PT is needed to restore the ability to walk without support. Short-term skilled nursing is needed to monitor for signs of decomposition or adverse events from the new COPD medical regimen."

Q: Is this the same requirement as the certification for home health care?

A: No, however the face-to-face encounter for home health care can be included in the already required certification documentation or on a separate form.

Q: What if the patient is discharged from hospital or acute care?

A: For patients admitted to home health upon discharge from a hospital or acute care facility, the physician who cared for the patient in an acute or post-acute facility can inform the certifying physician regarding their encounters with the patient and of the patient's need for skilled services and homebound status, in order to satisfy the face-to-face encounter requirement, much like an NPP currently can. Alternatively, the physician who cared for the patient in an acute or post-acute facility prior to the patient's home health admission can perform and document the face-to-face encounter and certify the patient's home health eligibility, initiate the plan of care, and hand off the plan of care to the patient's community physician. These physicians often complete the certification of home health eligibility for a patient, which now includes the face-to-face documentation.

Healthcare Professionals Role in the Requirement

Q: Who can document the encounter?

A: The certifying physician must document that he or she or an allowed physician practitioner (NPP)

