

CMS Clarifies Policy: PAs Authorized to Perform Hospital Admissions Duties

On Sept. 5, 2013 the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) issued [guidance](#) that affirms the ability of PAs, NPs and medical residents to personally write admission orders and perform the history and physical (H&P) for hospital inpatient admissions. The [guidance](#) clarifies language contained in the Hospital Inpatient Perspective Payment System (IPPS) rule for 2014, which called into question and appeared to restrict the authority of PAs and certain other professionals to provide these important services. A major purpose of the IPPS rule was to assist hospitals in defining the appropriate use of hospital admission versus observation status, thereby helping more Medicare beneficiaries become eligible for nursing home care after a minimum three-day hospital inpatient stay.

Prior to the release of the guidance, AAPA wrote Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, explaining that limiting the ability of PAs to provide hospital admission services would undermine patient access to necessary care and disrupt care in hospitals throughout the country, especially in rural communities and at critical access hospitals. AAPA Advocacy and Government Affairs staff and a PA hospital administrator met with senior CMS officials to express serious reservations about the language. CMS officials indicated it was not their intent to disrupt the important role PAs play in the hospital admissions process.

Even with the guidance, AAPA remains concerned about a required aspect of the admissions process—the physician certification of the admission. This certification occurs after the order is written and the H&P has been performed. The guidance states only a physician is authorized to authenticate the certification and the certification must occur prior to the patient's discharge. Additional CMS clarification is needed regarding the certification process so it can be determined whether barriers to practice efficiencies will be created, and how hospital electronic health records systems will be impacted.

AAPA will continue to work with CMS to help assure that the rule and subsequent clarification will not disrupt access to care or the ability of hospitals to utilize PAs to the full extent of their education and expertise.

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