



Home Health Care Planning

Action Requested: Cosponsor S. 445/H.R. 1825, the Home Health Care Planning Improvement Act of 2017.

Medicare beneficiaries will benefit from this needed legislation, particularly patients living in rural and other medically underserved communities. The ability of PAs and other advanced care providers to order home health care for their Medicare patients will greatly increase access to needed care, as well as promote continuity of care. Additionally, the ability of PAs to conduct the required face-to-face initial home health visit promises greater efficiency and reduced costs within Medicare's health care delivery system.

Background: Medicare coverage was originally extended to PAs through the 1977 Rural Health Clinic Services Act. Congress acknowledged that PAs had the educational preparation and skills to provide a wide range of primary care services to Medicare beneficiaries living in areas experiencing a shortage of physicians.

Congress' aim was to extend medical services to rural Medicare beneficiaries. Subsequent Congresses steadily expanded Medicare coverage for services provided by PAs. In 1997, the 105th Congress passed the Balanced Budget Act (BBA). Although the BBA made it clear that medical services provided by PAs, as allowed by state law, are covered by Medicare, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' interpretation of the law is that the BBA's Medicare provisions do not apply to PAs ordering home health care.

In some medically underserved areas, a PA may be the only health care professional on site. The inability of PAs to order and manage home health care disrupts continuity of care and may result in Medicare beneficiaries experiencing a delay or denial in accessing needed home health care. This outdated coverage policy decreases the availability of clinically appropriate care.

AAPA Legislative Recommendation: AAPA recommends that title XVIII of the Social Security Act be amended to permit PAs to order and manage home health care for their Medicare patients and to conduct the Medicare-required face-to-face initial home health visit in accordance with state law. AAPA urges Congress to support and pass the *Home Health Care Planning Improvement Act of 2015* (S. 445/H.R. 1825) introduced in the 115th Congress in the Senate by Sens. Susan Collins (R-ME) and Ben Cardin (D-MD) and in the House of Representatives by Reps. Chris Collins (R-NY) and Jan Schakowsky (D-IL).

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