

Medicare Home Health Training for Dementia Caregivers

Medicare offers a specific category of skilled nursing care called “teaching and training activities,” which involve skilled nursing personnel teaching an individual or his or her caregivers how to manage a treatment regimen.

For individuals living with dementia, behavioral disturbances can create challenges for the person’s medical treatment, care and well-being. As a result, Medicare offers a home health training that provides home health nurses with the information and resources to teach and train families and caregivers about Alzheimer’s disease and related behavioral symptoms.

This Medicare policy, “Home Health Skilled Nursing Care – Teaching and Training for Dementia Patients with Behavioral Disturbances,” is currently available in the following states and territories:

- Alaska
- American Samoa
- Arizona
- California
- Connecticut
- Guam
- Hawaii
- Idaho
- Maine
- Massachusetts
- Michigan
- Minnesota
- Nevada
- New Hampshire
- New Jersey
- New York
- Northern Mariana Islands
- Oregon
- Puerto Rico

- Rhode Island
- Vermont
- Virgin Islands
- Washington
- Wisconsin

National Government Services, Inc., the Medicare administrative contractor for home health and hospice claims for the above states and territories, developed this policy.

How to access the services

In general, Medicare pays for home health care for Medicare beneficiaries who are confined to their 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 coverage policy, National Government Services, Inc. also developed two case scenarios that illustrate how the policy can be used.

The first example features a woman with middle-stage (or moderate) Alzheimer's who is unable to bathe and groom herself. The woman's daughter, her primary caregiver, is frustrated because she feels her mother is "uncooperative." The woman's physician determines that this "uncooperativeness" is the result of receptive language impairments, perceptual misinterpretations and impairments in learned motor skills — all changes due to Alzheimer's disease. 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 middle-stage Alzheimer's who is gradually losing weight, experiences difficulty using utensils because of a tremor and, due to her wandering behavior, does not stay seated during meals. Her niece believes she is "trying to be difficult." Teaching and training services are justified in this situation because they can help maintain adequate nutrition.

More information

Detailed information about the policy is available on the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) website. Follow the steps below to access the policy article.

- Visit cms.gov/medicare-coverage-database/new-search/
- Type in keyword “dementia”
- Scroll down to the policy titled: “Home Health Skilled Nursing Care: Teaching and Training for Dementia Patients with Behavioral Disturbances,” Article A52845

Visit alz.org/medicare to learn more.

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