

Practice Perspectives

The National
Association of
Social Workers

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Frequently Asked Email Questions from Private Practitioners

The specialty area of private practice can present a multitude of challenges for newer and even seasoned clinical social workers. The following frequently asked email questions and answers provide general guidance for clinical social workers in this practice setting.

Q. I am a clinical social worker who is relocating to another state and was wondering if other states have reciprocity with mine so I can continue to provide services in the state to which I am relocating without having to receive another license.

A. There is currently no reciprocity between states/territories for clinical social workers. Clinical social workers should contact the licensing board of the state/territory in which they are interested in being licensed for specific information regarding licensure requirements and application processes. Requirements may vary depending on the state/territory, but social workers are generally able to transfer licensing exam scores from one state/territory to another. Applicants may also

be subject to additional requirements such as completion of state/territory-specific continuing education courses, as well as additional supervision and/or clinical hours. For more information, visit the Association of Social Work Boards at www.aswb.org.

Q. I have been providing services to a patient who is enrolled in Medicare and recently learned they also are enrolled in Medicaid. I have been collecting copays since I was under the impression they only participated in Medicare. What should I do?

A. Verify the patient's copayment amount with their Medicaid program. Submit a claim to Medicaid and refund any overpayment of copayment to the patient. Document what occurred in the patient's clinical record.

Q. Will Medicare reimburse non-clinical social workers for services rendered if they bill under a licensed clinical social worker?

A. Under Medicare, a non-clinical social worker is prohibited from billing under another clinical social worker's license and must be credentialed with Medicare to receive reimbursement. Exceptions, however, include

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clinical social workers who work in Rural Health Centers and Federally Qualified Health Centers. Additional information on this subject is available in the Practice Perspectives, Incident To Billing for Clinical Social Workers, at www.socialworkers.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=sfy4Tzht0Vg%3d&portalid=0

Q. Optum Pay has made changes to its payment management system. How will this impact in-network providers?

A. Optum Pay launched a premium version of their payment management system several months ago which charged providers a .5% fee to receive a detailed explanation of benefits. To address concerns raised by clinical social workers and other providers about this new fee, Optum has now included many of the premium features in its free basic version. Providers may also access payment and claims information free through Optum's Provider Express Portal. For more information, call 877-620-6194 or visit Optum Pay at <https://myservices.optumhealth.paymentservices.com/registrationSignIn.do>

Q. Where can I find information about An Hour with Private Practice: Questions and Answers?

A. NASW members can participate in An Hour with Private Practice: Questions & Answers (HOPP) sessions every third Wednesday of the month from 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm ET. Sessions are free to NASW members and provide important updates regarding the delivery of mental health services in a private solo or group practice. For more information, please refer to the following link: www.socialworkers.org/practice/an-hour-with-private-practice

Q. Am I able to get a National Provider Identifier Number (NPI) even though I'm not independently licensed?

A. Yes. Healthcare providers are eligible to receive an NPI. Individuals who are not licensed may apply and update their information in the National Plan and Provider Enumeration System (NPPES) should they become licensed. To apply for an NPI, visit the National Plan and Provider Enumeration System (NPPES) at <https://nppes.cms.hhs.gov/#/>

Q. What types of forms will I need for my private practice?

A. Private practitioners typically use a variety of forms including informed consent, financial agreement, release of information, and intake. There are many template forms available online that can be tailored to meet the needs of your private practice. HIPAA requires a specific set of forms for privacy and other policies. NASW members are able to access sample HIPAA forms at www.socialworkers.org/About/Legal/HIPAA-Help. A sample consent form is also available for those who are providing telehealth services at www.socialworkers.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=fN67-dVWQReM%3d&portalid=0 Telehealth

Q. I am currently providing telehealth services and wanted to know if I am able to provide services to patients across state lines.

A. At this time, clinical social workers are permitted to provide telehealth services across state/territory lines as long as they are licensed in the state/territory where the patient is physically located. You may also contact the patient's insurance company for specific up to date information on their telehealth policies, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Q. What advocacy efforts is NASW doing to provide the provision of services across state lines?

A. NASW is working with the Association of Social Work Boards and the Clinical Social Work Association to develop a compact between states/territories that will enable portability for social workers to practice in states participating in the compact. The compact development process begins in October 2021 and there will be a public comment period in the spring of 2022. NASW chapters will play a key role in getting legislation passed in each state/territory and this will begin in late 2022. The goal is for a number of states to enact the required legislation starting in 2023. For more information, go to www.socialworkers.org/Advocacy/Social-Justice/Interstate-Licensure-Compact-for-Social-Work

Q. I am a Medicare provider who is currently providing services via telehealth. Is Medicare permanently continuing the telehealth flexibilities allowed during the pandemic?

A. At this time, the telehealth flexibilities are still in place. NASW continues to advocate for the flexibility of access to clinical social work services. The organization is closely monitoring the situation and will inform its members of any changes. Your local Medicare Administrative Contractor may also be able to provide specific information on telehealth service coverage in your locality.

Q. Where can I find standards on providing telehealth services?

A. Please refer to the NASW, ASWB, CSWE, CSWA Standards for Technology in Social Work Practice at www.socialworkers.org/Practice/NASW-Practice-Standards-Guidelines/Standards-for-Technology-in-Social-Work-Practice

Q. Is telehealth covered by Medicare and other major health insurance companies?

A. Medicare and other third-party payers have temporarily expanded their coverage of telehealth services to respond to the current Public Health Emergency. Please consult your local Medicare Administrative Contractor and third-party payers with whom you are credentialed for specifics on coverage of telehealth services in your area.

NASW also has several resources on the topic of telehealth, which include:

- » 8 Ethical Considerations for Starting a Telehealth Practice www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Ethics-Education-and-Resources/Ethics-8/Starting-a-Telehealth-Practice
- » Telemental Health: Legal Considerations for Social Workers www.socialworkers.org/About/Legal/HIPAA-Help-For-Social-Workers/Telemental-Health
- » Medicare Telehealth Psychiatric CPT Codes Used by Clinical Social Workers www.socialworkers.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=clh5cgEk5E0%3d&portalid=0
- » Do's and Don'ts for Technology in Private Practice www.socialworkers.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=vdVDD-6Tnww=&portalid=0
- » Common Insurance Questions for Social Workers Performing Tele-therapy (Audio Recording) www.socialworkers.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=9V20uV4va5w=&portalid=0

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