



April 24, 2018

Seema Verma Administrator
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
Department of Health and Human Services
7500 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21244-8013

Email address: seema.verma@cms.hhs.gov

Dear Administrator Verma:

I am writing to you on behalf of 120,000 members of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) which is the largest professional organization of social workers in the United States. NASW is requesting the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to consider an outstanding issue related to skilled nursing facilities in the upcoming proposed rule of the physician fee schedule for 2019. NASW was unsuccessful in obtaining an appointment to discuss this matter with you, thus we are writing for your assistance.

Skilled Nursing Facility Issue

NASW reminds CMS of an outstanding issue to address a Medicare beneficiary inability to continue mental health treatment with a clinical social worker when they are transferred to a skilled nursing bed from a nursing home bed. As you are aware, a Medicare beneficiary in a nursing home bed can be transferred unexpectedly to a skilled nursing bed within the same day, building, room, and bed. In such situations, the Medicare beneficiary receiving mental health treatment from a clinical social worker must stop abruptly causing the Medicare beneficiary to suffer not only the loss of mental health services but their provider during a crucial time when continuous mental health treatment is needed. As a result, the Medicare beneficiary feels abandoned during a critical time of their declining physical health which may frequently impact positive outcomes and quality care.

In the June 28, 2002 proposed rule (**67 FR 43845**, page 43861), CMS indicated it would address comments received on the October 29, 2000 proposed rule entitled, "Clinical Social Worker Services." In the final rule dated December 31, 2002 (**65 FR 62681**, page 79987) of the Federal Register, Vol. 67, No. 251, CMS announced that it would not address this issue in the final rule, but in future rulemaking. The future rulemaking has not taken place and NASW encourages CMS to address this issue in the proposed and final rule of the 2019 physician fee schedule.

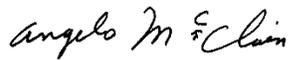
Medicare beneficiaries are requesting continuous mental health treatment by their clinical social work provider when they are transferred to a skilled bed within a nursing facility. Continuity of mental health

services is very important in the recovery of a Medicare beneficiary and improves treatment outcomes. NASW requests CMS to add clinical social workers to the mental health consolidated exclusion list where psychologists and psychiatrists are excluded from consolidated billing in skilled nursing facilities. The continuity of care by a clinical social worker from a nursing home bed to a skilled nursing bed would be at no additional cost to CMS. Instead, it would save CMS 25 per cent per patient since clinical social workers are paid 75 per cent of the physician fee schedule as compared to 100 per cent of the physician fee schedule for psychologists and psychiatrists.

NASW would appreciate CMS' prompt attention to this outstanding matter. If you have any questions about this request, please do not hesitate to contact me at naswceo@socialworkers.org or Mirean Coleman, Clinical Manager at mcoleman.nasw@socialworkers.org

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Angelo McClain, PhD, LICSW
CEO, National Association of Social Workers

cc: Laurence Wilson, Laurence.wilson@cms.hhs.gov

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