

# PROVIDER ALERT



**To:** AmeriHealth Caritas Louisiana Providers

**Date:** April 1, 2022

**Subject:** Hospice Prior Authorization

**Summary:** The Hospice Prior Authorization policy is approved by Louisiana Department of Health.

AmeriHealth Caritas Louisiana would like to make you aware of the attached policy that has been approved by the Louisiana Department of Health in accordance with La. R.S. 46:460.54 and **will become effective May 1, 2022.**

**Questions:** Thank you for your continued support and commitment to the care of our members. If you have questions about this communication, please contact AmeriHealth Caritas Louisiana Provider Services at 1-888-922-0007 or your [Provider Network Management Account Executive](#).

## Missed an alert?

You can find a complete listing of provider alerts on the [Provider Newsletters and Updates](#) page of our website.

## Where can I find more information on COVID-19?

AmeriHealth Caritas Louisiana has updated its website to streamline communications and important notifications about COVID-19. Please visit <http://amerihealthcaritasla.com/covid-19> for up-to-date information for both providers and members, including frequently asked questions, and important provider alerts from AmeriHealth Caritas Louisiana and the Louisiana Department of Health.



# Hospice prior authorization - ACLA

Clinical Policy ID: CCP.4014

Recent review date: 1/2022

Next review date: 5/2023

Policy contains: hospice, prior authorization

*AmeriHealth Caritas has developed clinical policies to assist with making coverage determinations. AmeriHealth Caritas' clinical policies are based on guidelines from established industry sources, such as the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), state regulatory agencies, the American Medical Association (AMA), medical specialty professional societies, and peer-reviewed professional literature. These clinical policies along with other sources, such as plan benefits and state and federal laws and regulatory requirements, including any state- or plan-specific definition of "medically necessary," and the specific facts of the particular situation are considered by AmeriHealth Caritas when making coverage determinations. In the event of conflict between this clinical policy and plan benefits and/or state or federal laws and/or regulatory requirements, the plan benefits and/or state and federal laws and/or regulatory requirements shall control. AmeriHealth Caritas' clinical policies are for informational purposes only and not intended as medical advice or to direct treatment. Physicians and other health care providers are solely responsible for the treatment decisions for their patients. AmeriHealth Caritas' clinical policies are reflective of evidence-based medicine at the time of review. As medical science evolves, AmeriHealth Caritas will update its clinical policies as necessary. AmeriHealth Caritas' clinical policies are not guarantees of payment.*

## Coverage policy

Prior authorization (PA) is required upon the initial request for hospice coverage. PA requests must be submitted within 10 calendar days of the hospice election date. If the PA is approved, it covers 90 days. If another 90-day election period is required, the PA request must be submitted at least 10 days prior to the end of the current election period. This will ensure that requests are received and approved/denied before the preceding period ends. If this requirement is not met and the period ends, reimbursement will not be available for the days prior to receipt of the new request.

The completed PA (see *Required Documentation* in this section,) which includes the updated and signed "Hospice Certification of Terminal Illness" (BHSF Form Hospice CTI) and all related documents, must be received before the period ends. Any PA request received after the period has ended will become effective on the date the request is received by the PAU if the request is approved. This policy also applies to PA packets received after eligibility has ended. It is the responsibility of the provider to verify eligibility on a monthly basis. The PA only approves the existence of medical necessity, not recipient eligibility.

All requests for hospice PA must be submitted to AmeriHealth Caritas Louisiana Utilization Management department.

Levels of hospice care, each with particular criteria and payment rates, include:

- **Routine Home Care.** Defined as when an individual who has elected to receive hospice care is at home and is not receiving continuous home care. The routine home care rate is paid without regard to the volume or intensity of routine home care services provided on any given day.
- **Continuous Home Care.** Defined as the individual receiving hospice care is not in an inpatient facility and receives care consisting predominantly of nursing care on a continuous basis at home. Continuous home care is only furnished during brief periods of medical crisis and only as necessary to maintain the terminally ill beneficiary at home.
- **Inpatient Respite Care.** Defined as when the individual receives care in an approved facility on a short-term basis to relieve the family members or other persons caring for the individual at home. Payment is made for respite care for a maximum of five continuous days at a time. Payment for the sixth day, and any subsequent days, is made at the routine home care rate.
- **General Inpatient Care.** Defined as when an individual receives general inpatient care in an inpatient facility for the purpose of pain control or acute or chronic symptom management, which cannot be managed in other settings. Payment is made for inpatient care for a maximum of five continuous days at a time, including the date of admission, but not counting the date of discharge. The hospice is the professional manager of the beneficiary's care.

### **Required Documentation**

Documentation should paint a picture of the recipient's condition by illustrating the recipient's decline in detail (e.g. documentation should show last month's status compared to this month's status and should not merely summarize the recipient's condition for a month). In addition, documentation should show daily and weekly notes and illustrate why the recipient is considered to be terminal and not "chronic". Explanation should include the reason the recipient's diagnosis has created a terminal prognosis and show how the systems of the body are in a terminal condition. Telephone courtesy calls are not considered face-to-face encounters and will not be reviewed for prior authorization.

The following information will be required upon the initial request for hospice services.

### **First Benefit Period (90 days)**

- Hospice Election Form (primary diagnosis code(s) using the International Classification of Disease, Tenth Revision (ICD-10) or its successor; other codes);
- Hospice Certification of Terminal Illness form (BHSF Form Hospice – CTI);
- Clinical/medical information;
- Hospice provider plan of care;
- Progress notes (hospital, home health, physician's office, etc.);
- Physician orders for plan of care; and
- Include Minimum Data Set (MDS) form (original and current) if recipient is in a facility; weight chart; laboratory tests; physician and nursing progress notes. The MDS form (original and current) is not required if the recipient has been in a long-term care facility less than 30 days. The MDS form must be provided upon the subsequent request for continuation of hospice services; and
- Documentation to support recipient's hospice appropriateness:
- Paint picture of recipient's condition;
- Illustrate why recipient is considered terminal and not chronic;

- Explain why his/her diagnosis has created a terminal prognosis; and
- Show how the body systems are in a terminal condition.

## Second and Subsequent Periods

Providers requesting PA for the second period, and each subsequent period, must send the following packet for prior authorization:

- MDS forms (original and current) are required; weight chart; laboratory tests; physician and nursing progress notes if the recipient resides in a nursing facility;
- An **updated** Hospice Certification of Terminal Illness form (BHSF Form Hospice-CTI) and a face-to-face encounter signed and dated by the hospice provider's medical director or physician member of the interdisciplinary group (IDG) for the third and subsequent requested PA periods;
- An updated plan of care;
- Updated physician's orders;
- List of current medications (within last 60 days);
- Current laboratory/test results (within last 60 days if available);
- Description of hospice diagnosis;
- Description of changes in diagnoses;
- Progress notes for all services rendered (daily/weekly physician, nursing, social worker, aide, volunteer and chaplain);
- A social evaluation;
- An updated scale such as: Karnofsky Performance Status Scale, Palliative Performance Scale or the Functional Assessment Tool (FAST);
- The recipient's current weight, vital sign ranges, lab tests and any other documentation supporting the continuation of hospice services. Documentation must illustrate the recipient's decline in detail. Compare last month's status to this month's status; and
- Original MDS; current MDS form if recipient is a resident in a facility.

This information must be submitted for all subsequent benefit periods and must show a decline in the recipient's condition for the authorization to be approved.

For PA, the prognosis of terminal illness will be reviewed. **A recipient must have a terminal prognosis in addition to a completed Hospice Certification of Terminal Illness form and proof of the face-to-face encounter.** Authorization will be made on the basis that a recipient is terminally ill as defined in federal regulations. These regulations require certification of the prognosis, rather than diagnosis. Authorization will be based on objective clinical evidence in the clinical record about the recipient's condition and not simply on the recipient's diagnosis.

A cover letter attached to the required information will not suffice for supporting documentation.

The supporting information must be documented within the clinical record with appropriate dates and signatures.

**Example:** A recipient receives hospice care during an initial 90-day period and is discharged or revokes his/her election of hospice care during a subsequent 90-day period, thus losing any remaining days in that election period. If this recipient chooses to elect a subsequent period of hospice care, even after an extended period

without hospice care, prior authorization will be required. The Notice of Election (NOE), Hospice Certification of Terminal Illness form, and all prior authorization documentation are due within the 10 day time frame. Reimbursement will be effective the date the required information is received by the PAU if receipt is past 10 days.

A provider, who anticipates the possibility of providing hospice care for a recipient beyond the initial 90-day election period, must submit a prior authorization packet to the PAU. The required information and any supporting documentation must be sent.

### **Written Notice of Prior Authorization Decision**

PA requests will be reviewed using the Medicare criteria found in local coverage determination hospice determining terminal status (L34538) and approved or denied within five working days. Once the review process has been completed and a decision has been made, the hospice provider will receive a written notification of the decision. A denial does not represent a determination that further hospice care would not be appropriate, but that based on the documentation provided, the recipient does not appear to be in the terminal stage of illness. Providers are encouraged to submit prior authorization packets for the next subsequent period within the set time frame when there is evidence of a decline in health if a prior period had been denied.

**NOTE:** It is the hospice provider's responsibility to inform the nursing facility of approval or denial.

## **Background**

Not applicable.

## **Findings**

Not applicable.

## **References**

On November 22, 2021, we searched PubMed and the databases of the Cochrane Library, the U.K. National Health Services Centre for Reviews and Dissemination, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. Search terms were [ccp.11\_policy\_search\_terms] We included the best available evidence according to established evidence hierarchies (typically systematic reviews, meta-analyses, and full economic analyses, where available) and professional guidelines based on such evidence and clinical expertise.

Louisiana Department of Health. 2012. Professional Services Provider Manual. Prior Authorization Process. Chapter 24, Section 24.6. Issued 03/26/2019.

Louisiana Department of Health. 2012. Hospice Provider Manual. Chapter 24, Section 24.9. Issued 08/25/2021.

## **Policy updates**

3/2021: initial review date and clinical policy effective date: 4/2021

1/2022: Policy updated to reflect change in state requirements.