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Implementation Date: N/A

Skilled Nursing Facility Consolidated Billing

Provider Types Affected

All Medicare providers, suppliers, physicians, skilled nursing facilities (SNF), and rural swing bed hospitals

Provider Action Needed

This article is informational only and is intended to remind affected providers that SNFs must submit all Medicare claims for the services its residents receive, except for a short list of specifically excluded services as mentioned in the “Excluded Services” section below. This requirement was established initially as specified in the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 (BBA, P.L. 105-33) and is known as SNF Consolidated Billing (CB).

Background

Prior to the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 (BBA), a SNF could elect to furnish services to a resident in a covered Part A stay, either:

- Directly, using its own resources;
- Through the SNF’s transfer agreement hospital; or
- Under arrangements with an independent therapist (for physical, occupational, and speech therapy services).

In each of these circumstances, the SNF billed Medicare Part A for the services.

However, the SNF also had the further option of “unbundling” a service altogether; that is, the SNF could permit an outside supplier to furnish the service directly to the resident, and the outside supplier would submit a bill to Medicare Part B, without any involvement of the SNF itself. This practice created several problems, including the following:

- A potential for duplicate (Parts A/B) billing if both the SNF and outside supplier billed;
- An increased out-of-pocket liability incurred by the beneficiary for the Part B deductible and coinsurance even if only the supplier billed; and

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- A dispersal of responsibility for resident care among various outside suppliers, which adversely affected quality (coordination of care) and program integrity, as documented in several reports by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) and the General Accounting Office (GAO).

Based on the above-mentioned problems, Congress enacted the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 (BBA), Public Law 105-33, Section 4432(b). This section of the law contains the SNF CB requirements. Under the CB requirement, **an SNF itself must submit all Medicare claims for the services that its residents receive** (except for specifically excluded services listed below).

Conceptually, SNF CB resembles the bundling requirement for inpatient hospital services that's been in effect since the early 1980s—assigning to the facility itself the Medicare billing responsibility for virtually the entire package of services that a facility resident receives, except for certain services that are specifically excluded.

CB eliminates the potential for duplicative billings for the same service to the Part A fiscal intermediary by the SNF and the Part B carrier by an outside supplier. It also enhances the SNF's capacity to meet its existing responsibility to oversee and coordinate the total package of care that each of its residents receives.

Effective Dates

CB became effective as each SNF transitioned to the Prospective Payment System (PPS) at the start of the SNF's first cost reporting period that began on or after July 1, 1998.

The original CB legislation in the BBA applied this provision for services furnished to every resident of an SNF, regardless of whether Part A covered the resident's stay. However, due to systems modification delays that arose in connection with achieving Year 2000 (Y2K) compliance, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) initially postponed implementing the Part B aspect of CB, i.e., its application to services furnished during noncovered SNF stays.

The aspect of CB related to services furnished during noncovered SNF stays has now essentially been repealed altogether by Section 313 of the Benefits Improvement and Protection Act of 2000 (BIPA, P.L. 106-554, Appendix F). Thus, with the exception of physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech-language pathology services (which remain subject to CB regardless of whether the resident who receives them is in a covered Part A stay), this provision now applies only to those services that an SNF resident receives during the course of a covered Part A stay.

Excluded Services

There are a number of services that are excluded from SNF CB. These services are outside the PPS bundle, and they remain separately billable to Part B when furnished to an SNF resident by an outside supplier. However, Section 4432(b)(4) of the BBA (as amended by Section 313(b)(2) of the BIPA) requires that bills for these excluded services, when furnished to SNF residents, must contain the SNF's Medicare provider number. Services that are categorically excluded from SNF CB are the following:

- Physicians' services furnished to SNF residents. These services are not subject to CB and, thus, are still billed separately to the Part B carrier.

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- Certain diagnostic tests include both a professional component (representing the physician's interpretation of the test) and a technical component (representing the test itself), and the technical component is subject to CB. **The technical component of these services must be billed to and reimbursed by the SNF.** (See Medlearn Matters Special Edition Article SE0440 for a more detailed discussion of billing for these diagnostic tests.)
- Section 1888(e)(2)(A)(ii) of the Social Security Act specifies that **physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech-language pathology services are subject to CB**, even when they are furnished by (or under the supervision of) a physician.
- Physician assistants working under a physician's supervision;
- Nurse practitioners and clinical nurse specialists working in collaboration with a physician;
- Certified nurse-midwives;
- Qualified psychologists;
- Certified registered nurse anesthetists;
- Services described in Section 1861(s)(2)(F) of the Social Security Act (i.e., Part B coverage of home dialysis supplies and equipment, self-care home dialysis support services, and institutional dialysis services and supplies);
- Services described in Section 1861(s)(2)(O) of the Social Security Act (i.e., Part B coverage of Epoetin Alfa (EPO, trade name Epogen) for certain dialysis patients. Note: Darbepoetin Alfa (DPA, trade name Aranesp) is now excluded on the same basis as EPO);
- Hospice care related to a resident's terminal condition;
- An ambulance trip that conveys a beneficiary to the SNF for the initial admission, or from the SNF following a final discharge.

Physician "Incident To" Services

While CB excludes the types of services described above and applies to the professional services that the practitioner performs personally, **the exclusion does not apply to physician "incident to" services** furnished by someone else as an "incident to" the practitioner's professional service. These "incident to" services furnished by others to SNF residents are subject to CB and, accordingly, must be billed to Medicare by the SNF itself.

Outpatient Hospital Services

In Program Memorandum (PM) Transmittal # A-98-37 (November 1998, reissued as PM transmittal # A-00-01, January 2000), CMS identified specific types of outpatient hospital services that are so exceptionally intensive or costly that they fall well outside the typical scope of SNF care plans. CMS has excluded these services from SNF CB as well (along with those medically necessary ambulance services that are furnished in conjunction with them). These excluded service categories are:

- Cardiac catheterization;

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- Computerized axial tomography (CT) scans;
- Magnetic resonance imaging services (MRIs);
- Ambulatory surgery that involves the use of an operating room;
- Emergency services;
- Radiation therapy services;
- Angiography; and
- Certain lymphatic and venous procedures.

Effective with services furnished on or after April 1, 2000, the Balanced Budget Refinement Act of 1999 (BBRA, P.L. 106-113, Appendix F) has identified certain additional exclusions from CB. The additional exclusions enacted in the BBRA apply only to certain specified, individual services *within* a number of broader service categories that otherwise remain subject to CB. Within the affected service categories the exclusion applies only to those individual services that are specifically identified by HCPCS code in the legislation itself, while all other services within those categories remain subject to CB. These service categories are:

- Chemotherapy items and their administration;
- Radioisotope services; and
- Customized prosthetic devices.

In addition, effective April 1, 2000, this section of the BBRA has unbundled those ambulance services that are necessary to transport an SNF resident offsite to receive Part B dialysis services.

Finally, effective January 1, 2004, as provided in the August 4, 2003 final rule (68 Federal Register 46060), two radiopharmaceuticals, Zevalin and Bexxar, were added to the list of chemotherapy drugs that are excluded from CB (and, thus, are separately billable to Part B when furnished to a SNF resident during a covered Part A stay).

Effects of CB

SNFs can no longer “unbundle” services that are subject to CB in order for an outside supplier to submit a separate bill directly to the Part B carrier. Instead, the SNF itself must furnish the services, either directly, or under an “arrangement” with an outside supplier in which the SNF itself (rather than the supplier) bills Medicare. The outside supplier must look to the SNF (rather than to Medicare Part B) for payment.

In addition, SNF CB:

- Provides an essential foundation for the SNF PPS, by bundling into a single facility package all of the services that the PPS payment is intended to capture;
- Spares beneficiaries who are in covered Part A stays from incurring out-of-pocket financial liability for Part B deductibles and coinsurance;

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- Eliminates potential for duplicative billings for the same service to the Part A fiscal intermediary (FI) by the SNF and to the Part B carrier by an outside supplier; and
- Enhances the SNF's capacity to meet its existing responsibility to oversee and coordinate each resident's overall package of care.

Additional Information

While this article presents an overview of the SNF CB process, CMS also has a number of articles that provide more specifics on how SNF CB applies to certain services and/or providers. These articles are as follows:

- Skilled Nursing Facility Consolidated Billing as It Relates to Certain Types of Exceptionally Intensive Outpatient Hospital Services
<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/medlearn/matters/mmarticles/2004/SE0432.pdf>
- Skilled Nursing Facility Consolidated Billing as It Relates to Ambulance Service
<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/medlearn/matters/mmarticles/2004/SE0433.pdf>
- Skilled Nursing Facility Consolidated Billing and Erythropoietin (EPO, Epoetin Alfa) and Darbepoetin Alfa (Aranesp)
<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/medlearn/matters/mmarticles/2004/SE0434.pdf>
- Skilled Nursing Facility Consolidated Billing as It Relates to Dialysis Coverage
<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/medlearn/matters/mmarticles/2004/SE0435.pdf>
- Skilled Nursing Facility Consolidated Billing and Preventive/Screening Services
<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/medlearn/matters/mmarticles/2004/SE0436.pdf>
- Skilled Nursing Facility Consolidated Billing as It Relates to Prosthetics and Orthotics
<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/medlearn/matters/mmarticles/2004/SE0437.pdf>
- Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act – Skilled Nursing Facility Consolidated Billing and Services of Rural Health Clinics and Federally Qualified Health Centers
<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/medlearn/matters/mmarticles/2004/SE0438.pdf>
- Skilled Nursing Facility Consolidated Billing as It Relates to Clinical Social Workers
<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/medlearn/matters/mmarticles/2004/SE0439.pdf>
- Skilled Nursing Facility Consolidated Billing as It Relates to Certain Diagnostic Tests
<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/medlearn/matters/mmarticles/2004/SE0440.pdf>
- Skilled Nursing Facility Consolidated Billing and "Incident To" Services (Services That Are Furnished as an Incident to the Professional Services of a Physician or Other Practitioner) (coming soon)

In addition, the CMS Medlearn Consolidated Billing Website can be found at:

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<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/medlearn/snfcode.asp>

It includes the following relevant information:

- General SNF consolidated billing information;
- HCPCS codes that can be separately paid by the Medicare carrier (i.e., services not included in consolidated billing);
- Therapy codes that must be consolidated in a non-covered stay; and
- All code lists that are subject to quarterly and annual updates and should be reviewed periodically for the latest revisions.

The SNF PPS Consolidated Billing Website can be found at:

<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/providers/snfpps/cb>

It includes the following relevant information:

- Background;
- Historical questions and answers;
- Links to related articles; and
- Links to publications (including transmittals and Federal Register notices).

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