

Home Health Care Planning Improvement Act of 2019



THE ISSUE

Current Medicare policy requires a physician to certify eligibility for home health services, even if the physician does not serve as the patient's primary care practitioner. This policy, which dates back to 1965, does not recognize that in today's healthcare system, primary care is often provided by a nurse practitioner, physician assistant or advanced practice nurse. This results in disjointed care and the insertion of a practitioner who may not be familiar with the patient's individual care needs.

In rural and underserved communities, in particular, nurse practitioners and other advanced practice nurses direct the care of Medicare beneficiaries, underscoring the importance of enabling them to certify eligibility for cost-effective, patient-preferred home health services.

THE SOLUTION

The Home Health Care Planning Improvement Act of 2019 ([H.R. 2150/S. 296](#)) would allow nurse practitioners, physician assistants and other advanced practice nurses to certify their patients' need and eligibility for home health services. Specifically, the legislation would:

- Ensure timely access to home health services.
- Permit non-physician practitioners to certify Medicare eligibility for home health for the patients they directly treat.
- Enable non-physician practitioners to certify the face-to-face encounter requirement.
- Improve care transitions for patients from the hospital and other facility-based to the home.
- Improve continuity of care for patients who are otherwise forced to seek care from an unfamiliar physician.

"There are decades of data supporting the ability of nurse practitioners, certified nurse midwives, and physician assistants to provide high quality care to people of all ages, including Medicare recipients with multiple chronic conditions. These three types of advanced practice registered nurses are often the only care providers available in health professional shortage areas such as urban and rural regions."

- AARP, March 2019

The Home Health Care Planning Improvement Act has strong bipartisan support, with 134 co-sponsors in the House and 46 in the Senate. It is also supported broadly by home health and nursing organizations as well as senior advocacy groups, including AARP.

**CONGRESS: Improve Access to Home Health
by Passing the Home Health Care Planning
Improvement Act**

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