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Reminder of the Required Three-day Hospital Stay for SNF Admissions

Note: This article was updated on April 9, 2013, to reflect current Web addresses. All other information remains unchanged.

Provider Types Affected

Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNF) and hospitals that discharge Medicare patients to SNFs.

Provider Action Needed



STOP – Impact to You

You need to remember that SNF admissions, not preceded by a hospital inpatient stay of at least three consecutive calendar days (not counting the day of discharge) within 30 days of the SNF admission, may *not* qualify for Medicare reimbursement.



CAUTION – What You Need to Know

To qualify for Medicare reimbursement, any SNF admission must be preceded by at least a three-day, inpatient hospital stay within 30 calendar days of the SNF admission. The length of this hospital stay cannot include the day of discharge, and moreover cannot count any Emergency Department or other outpatient observation care in the inpatient stay calculation. The required three-day inpatient stay begins on the day the patient is formally admitted to the hospital.



GO – What You Need to Do

Make certain that your billing offices, clinicians, and discharge planners are aware of this requirement, and consider establishing procedures to ensure that this requirement is met for any SNF admissions.

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Background

A recent DHHS Inspector General report noted multiple instances in which SNF admissions could not document the requisite three-day hospital inpatient stay within 30 days of the SNF Admission. These findings have prompted CMS to emphasize to Hospitals and SNFs this mandatory hospital stay requirement prior to a SNF admission. **Please remember that the three-day stay may not include any time spent in observation in the emergency room.**

Related Instructions

The legislative authority for coverage of SNF claims is contained in Section 1861 of the Social Security Act. Relevant government regulations are found in Title 42 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) and CMS coverage guidelines are found in both the intermediary and Skilled Nursing Facility manuals. To see the entire report by the Inspector General, go to <http://www.oig.hhs.gov/oas/reports/region5/50300063.htm> on the Internet.

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