

Hospice Certifying Enrollment

Questions and Answers (Q & A) Document

April 26, 2024

NOTE: In the event of any inconsistency, the policies in this Q & A document supersede those in the March 26, 2024, Medicare Learning Network update regarding the hospice certifying requirement at <https://www.cms.gov/Outreach-and-Education/Medicare-Learning-Network-MLN/MLNProducts/html/medicare-payment-systems.html#Hospice>.

Q: What is the hospice certifying requirement?

(NOTE: THE IMPLEMENTATION DATE OF THIS REQUIREMENT HAS BEEN DELAYED FROM MAY 1, 2024, TO JUNE 3, 2024.)

A: Starting June 3, 2024, under Section 6405 of the Affordable Care Act, the following physicians must be enrolled in or opted-out of Medicare for the service to be paid:

1. Hospice medical director or the physician member of the hospice interdisciplinary group who certifies the patient's terminal condition (hereafter occasionally referenced as "hospice physician").
2. Patient-designated attending physician (if they have one) who certifies their terminal condition.

Under 42 CFR § 418.22(c), these two categories of physicians must initially certify the patient's terminal condition. For subsequent coverage periods, only the hospice physician must certify the patient's terminal condition.

Q: Does this new requirement change who can certify for hospice services?

A: Except for the new enrollment or opt-out requirement, nothing is changing under 42 CFR § 418.22 regarding who may certify the patient's terminal illness.

Q: If the physician is enrolling in Medicare to satisfy the new requirement, which enrollment form should be submitted?

A: Unless the physician is planning to also bill Medicare for Part B services (in which case the Form CMS-855I should be submitted), he/she should submit the Form CMS-855O. In other words, if the physician is enrolling solely to certify hospice services under § 418.22(c) and will not bill Medicare for services furnished, the Form CMS-855O should be submitted.

Q: What, if anything, do currently enrolled or opted-out physicians need to do regarding this requirement?

A: If the physician is currently enrolled or opted-out, the physician does not need to do anything. The physician already meets the enrollment/opt-out requirement. In addition, it is unnecessary for the physician to have designated “hospice” as their specialty on their enrollment application. If the physician is enrolled or opted-out, they meet the new enrollment/opt-out requirement regardless of the specialty listed on their application.

Q: How can one check to see whether a physician is enrolled or opted-out?

A: Hospices can verify a physician’s enrollment or opt-out status using the CMS ordering and referring data file (ORDF), which lists all Medicare-enrolled and opted-out physicians. The ORDF has a separate column for hospice enrolled or opted-out physicians.

Q: A physician is enrolled and intends to certify for hospice services. However, the “Y” box in the Hospice column next to the physician’s name in the ORDF is not checked. Does this mean the physician cannot certify for hospice services?

A: If an individual is listed on the ORDF, it means that he/she meets the requirement to enroll or opt-out as a prerequisite for ordering or certifying the services/items outlined in 42 CFR 424.507. These are hospice services, home health services, DMEPOS items, clinical laboratory services, and imaging services. Meeting the requirement to enroll/opt-out under 42 CFR § 424.507 is different, however, than the individual qualifying as a provider/supplier type under Medicare regulations that can order or certify the service/item. For example, suppose an individual provider – Practitioner Smith -- is enrolled in Medicare to order/certify. He/she may meet the regulatory requirements to order DMEPOS items for patients but not to certify for hospice services per § 418.22(c). Whether an enrolled/opted-out individual listed in the ORDF is of a provider type that can order/certify for the services/items in § 424.507 will be denoted by a “Y” or “N” in the ORDF column for that service. Using our above example, the ORDF

DMEPOS column next to Smith's name will indicate "Y" while the Hospice column will indicate "N."

To reiterate, it is critical to distinguish the enrollment/opt-out requirement under § 424.507 from the ability of a certain provider type to order or certify a particular service or item. Simply because a non-physician practitioner type is enrolled or opted-out does not in and of itself mean that said type can order/certify a service/item under Medicare regulations. Again, this is why a certain non-physician practitioner may be listed in the ORDF but has an "N" listed in the Hospice column, because the person is not legally authorized under Medicare to make the § 418.22(c) certification.

Q: Must the certifying or recertifying physician remain enrolled for the patient's entire certification and benefit period?

A: The hospice physician and attending physician only need to be enrolled or opted-out at the time they make the certification or recertification. The physician does not need to remain enrolled or opted-out during the patient's entire certification and benefit period. Moreover, if the physician becomes unenrolled and non-opted-out, the hospice does not need to get a new certification to replace the one the previously enrolled or opted-out physician signed.

In a similar vein, the edits will only apply to claims with dates of service on or after June 3, 2024. If the service began prior to June 3 but continues through and after June 3, the edits will not apply until a claim is submitted with dates of services on or after June 3.

Q: For the enrollment/opt-out requirement, how should the claim form be completed and how will it be verified?

A: Starting June 3, 2024, CMS is only verifying the enrollment/opt-out status of the physician listed in the claim's "Attending Physician" field. Accordingly, hospices should enter the certifying physician in the "Attending Physician" field. So long as the hospice enters a physician in the "Attending Physician" field and that physician is in the PECOS record that is valid for edit dates, the claim will not edit.

Beginning October 7, 2024, CMS will begin verifying the enrollment/opt-out status of physicians listed in the "Other Physician" field. Once that occurs:

- CMS will check both the "Attending Physician" field and the "Other Physician" field.
- Both physicians, if different, will be subjected to the ordering and certifying denial edits for the initial certification period.

- For subsequent certifications, CMS will only check the “Other Physician” field for the certifying physician.
- Hospices should enter the attending physician in the “Attending Physician” field and the certifying physician in the “Other Physician” field. If the patient does not have an attending physician, the hospice should report the hospice certifying/recertifying physician in the “Attending Physician” field.

Q: Are physician assistants (PAs) and nurse practitioners (NPs) subject to this new enrollment/opt-out requirement concerning hospice services?

A: PAs and NPs cannot certify or recertify a patient for hospice as referenced in § 418.22(c). We stated this in CMS-1787-F, which is the regulation that finalized our new provision (88 FR 51164). Accordingly, they need not be enrolled for purposes of meeting the enrollment/opt-out requirements of § 424.507(b) regarding hospice certifications under § 418.22(c).