

CLINICAL PAYMENT AND CODING POLICY

If a conflict arises between a Clinical Payment and Coding Policy (CPCP) and any plan document under which a member is entitled to Covered Services, the plan document will govern. If a conflict arises between a CPCP and any provider contract pursuant to which a provider participates in and/or provides Covered Services to eligible member(s) and/or plans, the provider contract will govern. “Plan documents” include, but are not limited to, Certificates of Health Care Benefits, benefit booklets, Summary Plan Descriptions, and other coverage documents. BCBSTX may use reasonable discretion interpreting and applying this policy to services being delivered in a particular case. BCBSTX has full and final discretionary authority for their interpretation and application to the extent provided under any applicable plan documents.

Providers are responsible for submission of accurate documentation of services performed. Providers are expected to submit claims for services rendered using valid code combinations from Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) approved code sets. Claims should be coded appropriately according to industry standard coding guidelines including, but not limited to: Uniform Billing (UB) Editor, American Medical Association (AMA), Current Procedural Terminology (CPT®), CPT® Assistant, Healthcare Common Procedure Coding System (HCPCS), ICD-10 CM and PCS, National Drug Codes (NDC), Diagnosis Related Group (DRG) guidelines, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) National Correct Coding Initiative (NCCI) Policy Manual, CCI table edits and other CMS guidelines.

Claims are subject to the code edit protocols for services/procedures billed. Claim submissions are subject to claim review including but not limited to, any terms of benefit coverage, provider contract language, medical policies, clinical payment and coding policies as well as coding software logic. Upon request, the provider is urged to submit any additional documentation.

Inpatient Readmissions

Policy Number: CPCP027

Version 2.0

Clinical Payment and Coding Policy Committee Approval Date: December 1, 2021

Effective Date: January 1, 2022 (Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas Only)

Description

The purpose of this policy is to provide an explanation of the Plan’s process for reviewing inpatient reimbursement of stays that later result in a readmission. Under this policy, additional reimbursement *may* be denied or reduced for an inpatient readmission if the services rendered are considered a continuation of the initial treatment. The plan reserves the right to request supporting documentation. Claims may be reviewed on a case by case basis. While some readmissions are preventable it is understood that other readmissions are unplanned or are not preventable.

The Plan will review claims for hospital readmissions occurring within thirty (30) days, or the number of days specified in the providers contract, if different, of the initial discharge for the same, similar, or related diagnosis. This policy applies to all hospitals and facilities, including those within the same health system which practice under the same tax identification number (TIN) or subject to the same provider contract.

MCG Discharge Planning Tool is used as the policy resource for discharge planning and follow-up care. Providers who do not have access to the MCG website may request the MCG Discharge Planning Tool by contacting the Plan and requesting the criteria for discharge planning and post-acute care follow-up. The plan will coordinate necessary services with the hospital discharge planning staff and the admitting physician.

Background:

A hospital readmission is defined as a return hospitalization to an acute care hospital that follows a prior acute care admission within thirty (30) days of discharge from the same or another acute care hospital under the same agreement for a clinically related admission.

The goal of the Plan's Inpatient Readmissions review process is to establish quality of care and outcomes by conducting medically appropriate discharge planning and follow up care to avoid Potentially Preventable Readmissions (PPR).

Some readmissions are preventable, for example, providing patient education pertaining to discharge and recovery. It is encouraged that providers improve communication and care coordination to better engage members and caregivers in the discharge process to reduce avoidable readmissions. Examples of PPR may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Heart failure accounts
- Infection or complication from care provided from the initial admission
- Same procedure or treatment from the initial admission
- Procedure needed for an unsuccessful surgical intervention from the initial admission

Readmissions for unrelated occurrences after the initial discharge are not classified as a PPR and are excluded from the review process.

Readmission Review:

A readmission for an inpatient stay within 30 days of the initial stay for the same, similar, or related diagnosis may be denied or claim payment reduced based on this policy.

Medical Record Review Criteria

Any readmission to the same hospital within thirty (30) days of initial discharge is subject to a medical record review on a pre-adjudication or post-payment basis. The review criteria include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Readmissions related to the first admission
- Preventable readmissions
- Premature hospital discharge from the same facility or a facility within the same health system or under the same provider contract
- Unplanned surgery resulting in a continuation of the initial admission
- Condition or procedure attributed to readmission due to a failed surgical procedure or interventional service
- Infection due to the initial admission
- Medical necessity
- Exacerbation of symptoms of a chronic illness

Exclusions

The following are excluded from the readmission review process:

- Psychiatric/Substance abuse admissions
- Transplant services admissions
- Readmission due to discharges against medical advice (may require medical record review for determination)
- Multiple trauma
- Burns
- Some chronic conditions that may require follow-up care
- Neonatal and obstetrical admissions
- Elective admissions or staged procedures following commonly accepted practices
- Transfer from an out of network to an in-network facility
- Transfer due to level of care unavailable at the first facility
- Planned readmissions

Claim Review Process

Any readmission to the same hospital or facility within the same health system practicing under the same contract or TIN within thirty (30) days of initial discharge is subject to a claim review. A claim review may occur pre-adjudication or post payment and may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Provider contract assessment (In-network)
- Diagnosis related to initial admission
- PPR
- Prior admissions and discharge dates of service
- Medical records submitted with claim (claim adjudication is dependent on the outcome of a medical record review)
- Medical record will be requested if not accompanied with the claim submission

Claim Adjudication

The initial admission and subsequent readmissions will be adjudicated with the following considerations:

- The initial admission and readmission will be considered as a single admission
- All days for the initial admission and readmission must be pre-authorized
 - All authorized days for the initial admission and readmission will be combined to determine the approved length of stay
 - All days in-between admissions will not be considered for reimbursement
- If the authorized days from the readmission causes the combined admission to exceed the average length of stay determined for the assigned DRG, high-trim days will not be reimbursed in addition to the assigned DRG reimbursement
- All services for initial admission and readmission will be considered as a single claim for both inpatient stays
- Multiple readmissions will not be separately reimbursed when each stay is reimbursed per case/per admission
- If initial admission has been reimbursed, claims will be combined to determine reimbursement

References:

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Policy Update History:

Approval Date	Description
02/06/2020	New policy
12/01/2021	Annual Review