

Choosing Home Health Care



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Home Health Care Guide

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Chapter 1

Home Health Care Overview

Home Health Care is designed to keep individuals independent and safe in their home environment. The two main types of home health care are Private Pay and Medicare Certified. Each can be provided independently, or combined to provide the required care. Home health care agencies are not licensed or regulated by the State of Michigan. Individual nurses or health professionals employed by home health care agencies are licensed and you may check the Michigan Department of Community Health website for the regulatory history of a person that would be assigned as a care provider.

Private Pay

Private Pay home health care services are tailored to meet the needs of the patient and enable them to maintain their independence. The services provided depend upon what the patient needs -- examples include: nursing, home health aides, therapists, etc. Private Pay may take place in a variety of settings, which include homes, apartments, assisted living facilities, homes for the aged, and nursing homes. Private Pay home health care is non-reimbursable through Medicare with the cost of care covered by the patient or family members, or long-term-care policies, if applicable. A Private Pay agency's employees may work up to 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Medicare Certified

Medicare Certified home health care helps patients to recover in the comfort of their own home, apartment, assisted living, or senior retirement facility. Medicare Certified home health care does not provide services in nursing facilities because home health care companies are covered 100% by Medicare. Medicare will cover the patient's home health services as long as the patient is eligible and the patient's doctor says that the patient needs services.

Eligibility

In order to receive Medicare Certified home health care, the patient must meet the following requirements:

- A patient's doctor must decide that the patient needs medical care at home and must formulate a plan for this care.
- The patient must need one or more of the following services:
 - Intermittent Skilled Nursing Care
 - Physical Therapy
 - Speech-Language Pathology Services
 - Continued Need for Occupational Therapy

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- Medicare will not allow home health aides to enter into the home without a skilled component also being provided, and there is no willing and able person available to assist with the tasks done by the home health aide.
- The home health care agency must be Medicare Certified.
- The person must be homebound in that it takes a considerable and taxing effort for them to leave the home. A person may still receive Medicare Certified home health care if they leave for medical treatment or make short infrequent trips for non-medical reasons such as going to the barber, or attending church services.

Who it Benefits

Those who typically benefit from Medicare Certified home health care services are:

- Recovering from recent illness.
- Discharged from a hospital or nursing home, but need additional care.
- In need of assistance to live independently at home.
- Diagnosed with a new condition, which requires teaching and training of symptom and medication management.
- Chronic conditions have recently worsened which require changes in treatment and new symptom management.
- Patient/patient's family who's noticed a change in the patient's physical condition as evidenced by difficulty walking, and/or falls in the home.

Services

Some services provided by a Medicare Certified home health care agency include:

- **Registered Nurse (RN)**
 - Skilled Assessment
 - Teaching
 - Wound Care/Dressing Changes
 - Medication Instruction
 - Catheter Care
 - Tube Feedings/Care
 - Ostomy Care
 - Diabetic Care
- **Physical Therapy (PT)**
 - Gait Training and Exercise
 - Balance and Transfer Training
 - Rehabilitation Techniques
 - Home Exercise Program
 - Symptom Control Education
 - Ultrasound Therapy
 - E-Stim Therapy

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- Post-Op Orthopedic Rehab
- Neuromuscular Rehab

- **Occupational Therapy (OT)**
 - Activities of Daily Living
 - Work Simplification
 - Fine Motor Coordination
 - Orthotics/Splinting
 - Adaptive Equipment

- **Speech Therapy (ST)**
 - Voice Disorder Treatments
 - Speech Articulation
 - Swallowing Treatments
 - Language Disorders
 - Memory Retraining
 - Cognitive Retraining

- **Medical Social Work (MSW)**
 - Community Resource Planning
 - Long Term Planning
 - Counseling
 - Nurse at Home Placement

- **Home Health Aide (HHA)**
 - Personal Hygiene
 - Bathing, Shaving, Hair Care
 - Preparation of Light Meals

Services provided by Private Pay may include all of the above Medicare Certified services as well as:

- Medication Assistance/Reminders
- Shower Assistance
- Morning/Evening Assistance
- Personal Hygiene
- Incontinence Care
- Blood Pressure Monitoring
- Escorts to and from Meals
- Meal Preparation
- Safety Checks
- Laundry
- Light Housekeeping
- Transportation

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Choosing a Home Health Care Agency

Checklist for Choosing a Private Duty Company

There are many Private Duty companies available to the public but how does a person compare one company to the next? Below is a checklist that can be used to help a patient determine which Private Duty company is right for them.

1. How long has the Private Duty company been serving the community?
2. How long has the potential caregiver been working in the health care and private duty industries?
3. Has the patient/patient's family met with and interviewed the potential caregiver?
4. Has the company performed background checks on its employees?
5. Does the caregiver have references?
6. Has the patient/patient's family contacted and spoken with those references?
7. Does the company have nurses available 24 hours a day?
8. Is the company bonded?
9. Does the company perform fingerprinting on its employees?
10. Is the company insured?
11. Does the company assign supervisors to oversee the quality of care?
12. Is the procedure to handle emergencies laid out and explained?

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Checklist for Choosing a Medicare Certified Home Health Care Agency

There are many home health care companies available in Michigan so how does a patient know which Medicare Certified Home Health Care Agency is right for them?

1. How long has the Medicare Certified home health care agency been servicing the community?
2. Do the nurses and therapists get the patient's family involved with the patient's care?
3. Does this provider assign supervisors to oversee the quality of care patients are receiving in their homes? Who can the patient and his/her family members call with questions or complaints? How does the company follow-up on and resolve problems?
4. Does the provider offer information regarding who to contact with complaints about care? How does the company follow-up on and resolve problems?
5. Does the provider notify the patient of his/her rights and responsibilities? This should help to detail what the patient should reasonably expect while home health care is taking place.
6. Does the provider offer help finding resources made available to the patient in their community?
7. Does the provider offer the patient a Statement of Patient Privacy Rights? The Statement of Patient's Privacy Rights helps to explain home health care is taking place.
8. Does the provider offer the patient the company's policies and procedures regarding Advanced Directives?
9. Does the provider offer information regarding safety informing the patient of what to do in emergency situations such as bad weather, fire, falls, oxygen and poison safety?
10. Does the provider offer information regarding infection control and disease prevention?
11. Is the company Accredited by the Joint Commission, the Community Health Accreditation Program (CHAP), or the Accreditation Commission for Health Care (ACHC)?

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Patient Rights

Federal law requires that individuals receiving Medicare Certified home health care services be informed of their rights as a patient. Some of these rights include:

- Being fully informed of all of his or her rights and responsibilities by the home health care agency.
- Choosing a Medicare Certified home health care provider.
- Receiving appropriate and professional care in accordance with the physician's orders.
- Receiving a timely response from the company to his/her request for service.
- Being advised of any change in the plan of care, before the change is made.
- Refusing treatment within the confines of the law and to be informed of the consequences of his or her action.
- Having health care providers comply with advance directives in accordance with state law requirements.
- Voicing grievances and suggest changes in service or staff without fear of restraint or discrimination.
- Being advised of the telephone number and hours of operation of the state's home health care hotline.

Filing a Complaint

In the event that a patient becomes dissatisfied with the provider's service, they have the ability to contact the State of Michigan's home health care hotline, which receives questions and/or complaints about local home health care agencies as well as complaints concerning the implementation of advance directive requirements. This hotline is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and can be reached by calling **1-800-882-6006**.

Written complaints may be sent to the Michigan Department of Community Health, Bureau of Health Services, Complaint Investigation Unit, P.O. Box 30664, Lansing, MI 48909.

Advance Directives

An advance directive tells the physician what kind of care a patient would like to receive if that patient becomes unable to make medical decisions. A quality advance directive will describe the type of treatment a patient would like to receive depending on their level of sickness. For instance, if a patient becomes permanently unconscious, the advance directives would tell the doctor treatments that the patient would and would not like to receive.

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Chapter 3

Common Terminology

Activities of Daily Living (ADL)

Basic actions of normal life activities, to include:

- Bathing
- Dressing and Undressing
- Eating
- Transferring from bed to chair, and back
- Voluntarily controlling urinary and fecal discharge
- Using the toilet
- Walking (as opposed to being bedridden)

Medicare Certification

The certification process is different for each accrediting organization; however, the process generally includes undergoing an on-site survey by the organization's surveyor. Following the on-site survey, the organization will receive an accreditation report outlining the findings and any follow-up requirements. These requirements include improvement, supplemental findings, and organizational strengths. The organization acts as a representative for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). All Medicare Certified home health care agencies must be certified by CMS.

Intermittent

Medicare does not pay for health care staff to stay with patients for an extended period of time, thus the skilled care giver will only stay for the length of time it takes to provide the specific treatment ordered by the doctor.

Patient Choice

When a patient has been recommended by a physician to receive home health care, they have the right to choose which Medicare Certified home health care agency to use. The patient has the right to choose any Medicare Certified home health care agency, even if the doctor makes a recommendation.

Plan of Care

A plan of care describes what kind of services and care the patient receives for his/her health problem. The doctor will work with the home health care staff to decide on things such as the types of services needed, and how often these services are needed.

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Primary Care Doctor

A primary care doctor is a doctor who has been trained to give a patient basic care. A patient's primary care doctor is the doctor the patient sees first for most health problems. He or she makes sure that the patient gets the care that the patient needs to keep healthy.

Skilled Care

Skilled care is a type of health care given when a patient needs skilled nursing or rehabilitation staff to manage, observe, and evaluate a patient's care.

Skilled Nursing Care

Skilled nursing care is a level of care that includes services that can only be performed safely and correctly by a licensed nurse (either a registered nurse or a licensed practical nurse).

Telemedicine

Telemedicine is a professional service given to a patient through an interactive telecommunications system by a practitioner at a distant site.

Unskilled Care

A type of home health care service that provides non-professional care to assist a person's activities of daily living such as walking, getting in and out of bed, bathing, dressing, eating, toileting, and taking medications.

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Chapter 4

Why Accreditations are Important

There are three major accrediting companies that service the Medicare Certified home health care industry. These companies are The Joint Commission, Community Health Accreditation Program (CHAP), and Accreditation Commission for Health Care (ACHC). The importance of these three accreditations is showing the patients the additional focus on patient care that agencies place in order to earn these accreditations. Only the highest quality of Medicare Certified home health care companies is able to earn such honors.

Home Health Care Accreditation Types

- **The Joint Commission**
[The Joint Commission](#) was established in 1961 and evaluates and accredits more than 16,000 health care organizations. The Joint Commission focuses on improving the quality of care and safety provided by health care organizations.
- **CHAP**
[The Community Health Accreditation Program](#) was established in 1965 and their goal is to objectively validate the excellence of community health care practice through consistent measurement of the delivery of quality services.
- **ACHC**
[The Accreditation Commission for Health Care](#) was established in 1985 and their goal is to support healthcare organizations and providers in optimizing wellness through standards that promote the effective, efficient delivery of quality services and products.

Featured Links

[Medicare Home Health Compare](#)
[Department of Community Health – Home Health Agencies](#)
[Michigan Office of Services to the Aging – Hiring Paid Caregivers](#)
[Michigan Home Health Association](#)