



Survey Guidelines: Home Health

28 Pa. Code §601.31 Acceptance of Patients, Plan of Treatment and Medical Supervision. (d)Conformance with Physician Orders.

Overview

There is a paucity of data on impact of the timing of co-signing of verbal orders as it relates to verbal order safety. Recommended times in the literature vary from 24 hours to a default 30 days.

Balancing the practical realities of home care, such as the issuing practitioner's availability, against the need to verify and authenticate orders, the Department believes it reasonable to be flexible regarding the timeframe in which to catch an error in a verbal order and authenticate who actually gave the order.

CMS requires oral orders to be countersigned and dated by the physician before the home health agency bills for the care in the same way as the plan of care. Current Department regulations require physician's countersignature within 7 days of an oral order. The Department understands home health care providers' concerns that strict enforcement of this provision presents unreasonable hardship for providers. However, the Department is charged with protecting the safety of home health customers and with enforcing applicable regulations, including this regulation. The Department must balance this significant obligation against the perceived hardship experienced by home health agencies. Therefore, the Department establishes these guidelines applicable to surveys of licensed home health agencies for use by Department surveyors.

Guideline

Home health agencies may vary from the 7 day requirement for countersignature of an oral order under the following conditions:

An oral order not countersigned within 7 days must be accompanied by clearly documented evidence of the agency's continuing efforts to obtain the countersignature within that timeframe. All contacts and attempts at contact with the prescriber, by any means of communication, must be documented including the date, time, and the signature of the individual making or attempting to make the contact. This notation regarding prescriber contact may be on the assessment, a case communication note, or other document maintained in the clinical record. If documentation of the attempt(s) to obtain the required countersignature is provided as stated herein, no deficiency citation will be issued, though the surveyor may make note of this lacking for a subsequent survey.

A deficiency citation will be issued if there is no documentation of any attempt(s) to obtain the required countersignature as explained above.

Any oral order not countersigned within 30 days of original issue, regardless of the number of attempts to obtain countersignature, will result in a citation.