

Medicare Home Health Coverage In Light of *Jimmo v. Sebelius*

YOU DO NOT HAVE TO IMPROVE TO QUALIFY FOR MEDICARE COVERAGE

Medicare Beneficiaries Who Receive Skilled Nursing and/or Skilled Therapy Can Qualify For Medicare Coverage of Home Health If:

- The individual is homebound. This means that the individual needs the assistance of another person or of a supportive device, or it is contraindicated for the individual to leave home. (For example, the individual has a psychiatric illness that makes it unsafe for him/her to leave home or to leave alone although s/he has no physical limitations.) In addition, leaving home requires a “considerable and taxing effort,” and there is a normal inability to leave home. An individual can leave home in order to receive health care treatment, including at an adult day care program, and for certain other allowed reasons, such as to attend religious services. In addition, absences, that are infrequent or of relatively short durations are allowed – such as for a walk around the block, a drive, or attending a family occasion. The homebound requirement does not mean that an individual can never leave home or is bedbound;
- A physician orders the care, signing and certifying a “Plan of Care;”
- A physician, or a recognized non-physician health care professional, had a face-to-face meeting with the individual prior to certifying the individual’s need for home health care;
- A document about the face-to-face meeting, signed by a physician, is included in the home health care certification;
- The individual requires skilled nursing care on an intermittent basis, or skilled physical therapy, speech-language pathology services, or, in some instances, occupational therapy (to continue care once Medicare coverage has begun);
- The care is provided by a Medicare-certified home health agency;
- **Note:** If the above requirements are met, Medicare will also cover necessary and reasonable home health aides, medical social services, and some supplies.

Patients who meet these Medicare criteria can qualify for coverage.

Remember: Medicare home health coverage is **not just a short-term, acute care benefit**. Under the law, Medicare beneficiaries who meet the threshold qualifying criteria are eligible for home health coverage so long as skilled care is reasonable and necessary.

**For additional information, see the Center for Medicare Advocacy’s
*Medicare Home Health Coverage and Jimmo v. Sebelius Toolkit***