
Program Memorandum Intermediaries/Carriers

Department of Health &
Human Services (DHHS)
Centers for Medicare &
Medicaid Services (CMS)

Transmittal AB-02-036

Date: MARCH 21, 2002

CHANGE REQUEST 2047

SUBJECT: Temporary Codes for Ambulance Fee Schedule

Scope:

This Program Memorandum (PM) establishes two new temporary codes for ambulance services (type of service D) under the ambulance fee schedule and deletes a code that would have been effective April 1, 2002.

Background:

A series of PMs have been issued to implement the National Ambulance Fee Schedule (FS). A recent change in requirements dictates this change in Healthcare Common Procedure Coding System (HCPCS) codes for Advanced Life Support (ALS) transport dispatches but only Basic Life Support (BLS) services are ultimately provided.

Policy:

The policy of paying according to the medically necessary services actually furnished continues to apply under the FS. In other words, payment is based on the level of service provided, not on the vehicle used. Even if a local government requires an ALS response for all calls, Medicare pays only for the level of service provided, and then only when the service is medically necessary. The use of Q3019 and Q3020 described below is effective only during the transition.

ALS Vehicle Used, Emergency Transport, No ALS Service Furnished

During the transition period, if an ALS vehicle is used for an emergency transport, but no ALS level service is furnished, the FS portion of the blended payment will be based on the emergency BLS level. The amount on the FS for HCPCS Q3019 is the same fee as BLS-Emergency (BLS-E), FS HCPCS A0429. The reasonable charge portion of the blended payment will be the ALS emergency rate.

ALS Vehicle Used, Non-Emergency Transport, No ALS Service Furnished

During the transition period, if an ALS vehicle is used for a non-emergency transport, but no ALS level service is furnished, the FS portion of the blended payment will be based on the non-emergency Basic Life Support (BLS) level. The amount displayed on the FS for HCPCS Q3020 is the same fee displayed for BLS non-emergency, FS HCPCS A0428. The reasonable charge portion of the blended payment will be the ALS non-emergency rate.

See the attachment "Ambulance HCPCS Crosswalk and Definitions", for a crosswalk of new HCPCS to old HCPCS. For HCPCS Q3019 and Q3020, this crosswalk is relevant for payment purposes only. Old HCPCS codes did not exist for these services.

CMS-Pub. 60AB

Only ALS Service Furnished is ALS Assessment

In AB 01-165 (CR 1555) the policy was established that when an ALS ambulance arrives, an ALS assessment is provided, but no other ALS service is provided, HCPCS code Q3017 was appropriate. This code was to be applicable only during the transition period.

This policy is rescinded. Delete the HCPCS code Q3017.

When only an ALS assessment is furnished before the transport, the services should be billed as ALS emergency service A0427 and crosswalked to the appropriate ALS emergency reasonable charge amount.

Implementation:

1. Delete Q3017.
2. New HCPCS code Q3019 is ALS vehicle used, Emergency transport, no ALS level service furnished.

Carriers: Blend FS Q3019 with reasonable charge ALS-E (A0310, A0330, A0350, A0370).

Intermediaries: The fee for this service should be blended with the appropriate reasonable cost.

NOTE: This code applies only when the ALS crew did not perform an ALS assessment.

3. New HCPCS code Q3020 is ALS vehicle used, non-Emergency transport, no ALS level service furnished.

Carriers: Blend FS Q3020 with reasonable charge ALS non-emergency (A0306, A0326, A0346, A0366).

Intermediaries: The fee for this service should be blended with the appropriate reasonable cost.

Provider Education:

Update your web site with this information.

Advise providers of these changes as soon as possible through the customary media. This new policy will be included in the general provider education currently being prepared.

Attachment

The effective date for this PM is April 1, 2002

The implementation date for this PM is April 1, 2002

These instructions should be implemented within your current operating budget.

This PM may be discarded after March, 31, 2006

If you have any questions, contact Dolores Crujeiras, (410) 786-7169 for carrier claims processing operational issues, Nicole Atkins (410) 786-8278 for intermediary claims processing operational issues, and Glenn McGuirk, (410)786-5723 for policy issues.

**ATTACHMENT
AMBULANCE HCPCS CROSSWALK AND DEFINITIONS**

New HCPCS Code	Description of HCPCS Codes	Old HCPCS Code
A0430	Ambulance service, conventional air services, transport, one way, fixed wing (FW)	A0030
A0431	Ambulance service, conventional air services, transport, one way, rotary wing (RW)	A0040
A0429	Ambulance service, basic life support (BLS), emergency transport, water, special transportation services	A0050
A0428	Ambulance service, BLS, non-emergency transport, all inclusive (mileage and supplies)	A0300 (Method 1)
A0429	Ambulance service, BLS, emergency transport, all inclusive (mileage and supplies)	A0302 (Method 1)
Q3020	Ambulance service, advanced life support (ALS), non-emergency transport, no specialized ALS services rendered, all inclusive (mileage and supplies)	A0304 (Method 1)
A0426	Ambulance service, ALS, non-emergency transport, specialized ALS services rendered, all inclusive (mileage and supplies)	A0306 (Method 1)
Q3019	Ambulance service, ALS, emergency transport, no specialized ALS services rendered, all inclusive (mileage and supplies)	A0308 (Method 1)
A0427	Ambulance service, ALS, emergency transport, specialized ALS services rendered, all inclusive (mileage and supplies)	A0310 (Method 1)
A0433	Ambulance service, advanced life support, level 2 (ALS2), all inclusive (mileage and supplies)	A0310 (Method 1)
A0434	Ambulance service, specialty care transport (SCT), all inclusive (mileage and supplies)	A0310 (Method 1)
A0428	Ambulance service, BLS, non-emergency transport, supplies included, mileage separately billed	A0320 (Method 2)
A0429	Ambulance service, BLS, emergency transport, supplies included, mileage separately billed	A0322 (Method 2)
Q3020	Ambulance service, ALS, non-emergency transport, no specialized ALS services rendered, supplies included, mileage separately billed	A0324 (Method 2)
A0426	Ambulance service, ALS, non-emergency transport, specialized ALS services rendered, supplies included, mileage separately billed	A0326 (Method 2)
Q3019	Ambulance service, ALS, emergency transport, no specialized ALS services rendered, supplies included, mileage separately billed	A0328 (Method 2)
A0427	Ambulance service, ALS, emergency transport, specialized ALS services rendered, supplies included, mileage separately billed	A0330 (Method 2)
A0433	Ambulance service, ALS2, supplies included, mileage separately billed	A0330 (Method 2)
A0434	Ambulance service, SCT, supplies included, mileage separately billed	A0330 (Method 2)
A0428	Ambulance service, BLS, non-emergency transport, mileage included, disposable supplies separately billed	A0340 (Method 3)
A0429	Ambulance service, BLS, emergency transport, mileage included,	A0342

	disposable supplies separately billed	(Method 3)
Q3020	Ambulance service, ALS, non-emergency transport, no specialized ALS services rendered, mileage included, disposable supplies separately billed	A0344 (Method 3)
A0426	Ambulance service, ALS, non-emergency transport, specialized ALS services rendered, mileage included, disposable supplies separately billed	A0346 (Method 3)
Q3019	Ambulance service, ALS, emergency transport, no specialized ALS services rendered, mileage included, disposable supplies separately billed	A0348 (Method 3)
A0427	Ambulance service, ALS, emergency transport, specialized ALS services rendered, mileage included, disposable supplies separately billed	A0350 (Method 3)
A0433	Ambulance service, ALS2, mileage included, disposable supplies separately billed	A0350 (Method 3)
A0434	Ambulance service, SCT, mileage included, disposable supplies separately billed	A0350 (Method 3)
A0428	Ambulance service, BLS, non-emergency transport, mileage and disposable supplies separately billed	A0360 (Method 4)
A0429	Ambulance service, BLS, emergency transport, mileage and disposable supplies separately billed	A0362 (Method 4)
Q3020	Ambulance service, ALS, non-emergency transport, no specialized ALS services rendered, mileage and disposable supplies separately billed	A0364 (Method 4)
A0426	Ambulance service, ALS, non-emergency transport, specialized ALS services rendered, mileage and disposable supplies separately billed	A0366 (Method 4)
Q3019	Ambulance service, ALS, emergency transport, no specialized ALS services rendered, mileage and disposable supplies separately billed	A0368 (Method 4)
A0427	Ambulance service, ALS, emergency transport, specialized ALS services rendered, mileage and disposable supplies separately billed	A0370 (Method 4)
A0433	Ambulance service, ALS2, mileage and disposable supplies separately billed	A0370 (Method 4)
A0434	Ambulance service, SCT, mileage and disposable supplies separately billed	A0370 (Method 4)
A0425	BLS mileage (per mile)	A0380 (averaged with A0390)
None	BLS routine disposable supplies	A0382
None	BLS specialized service disposable supplies; defibrillation (used by ALS ambulances and BLS ambulances in jurisdictions where defibrillation is permitted in BLS ambulances)	A0384
A0425	ALS mileage (per mile)	A0390 (averaged with A0380)
None	ALS specialized service disposable supplies; defibrillation (to be used only in jurisdictions where defibrillation cannot be performed by BLS ambulances)	A0392
None	ALS specialized service disposable supplies; IV drug therapy	A0394
None	ALS specialized service disposable supplies; esophageal intubation	A0396
None	ALS routine disposable supplies	A0398
None	Ambulance waiting time (ALS or BLS), one-half (1/2) hour increments	A0420

None	Ambulance (ALS or BLS) oxygen and oxygen supplies, life sustaining situation	A0422
None	Extra ambulance attendant, ALS or BLS (requires medical review)	A0424
None	Unlisted ambulance service	A0999
A0432	Paramedic ALS intercept (PI), rural area transport furnished by a volunteer ambulance company which is prohibited by state law from billing third party payers.	Q0186
A0435	Air mileage; FW, (per statute mile)	Local Carrier Code
A0436	Air mileage; RW, (per statute mile)	Local Carrier Code

Definitions of Level of Service

BLS	Basic Life Support (BLS): Where medically necessary, the provision of basic life support (BLS) services as defined in the National EMS Education and Practice Blueprint for the EMT-Basic including the establishment of a peripheral intravenous (IV) line.
ALS1	Advanced Life Support, Level 1 (ALS1): Where medically necessary, the provision of an assessment by an advanced life support (ALS) provider and/or the provision of one or more ALS interventions. An ALS provider is defined as a provider trained to the level of the EMT-Intermediate or Paramedic as defined in the National EMS Education and Practice Blueprint. An ALS intervention is defined as a procedure beyond the scope of an EMT-Basic as defined in the National EMS Education and Practice Blueprint.
ALS2	Advanced Life Support, Level 2 (ALS2): Where medically necessary, the administration of at least three different medications and/or the provision of one or more of the following ALS procedures: Manual defibrillation/cardioversion, Endotracheal intubation, Central venous line, Cardiac pacing, Chest decompression, Surgical airway, Intraosseous line.
SCT	Specialty Care Transport (SCT): Where medically necessary, in a critically injured or ill patient, a level of inter-facility service provided beyond the scope of the Paramedic as defined in the National EMS Education and Practice Blueprint. This is necessary when a patient's condition requires ongoing care that must be provided by one or more health professionals in an appropriate specialty area (nursing, medicine, respiratory care, cardiovascular care, or a paramedic with additional training).
PI	Paramedic Intercept (PI): These services are defined in 42 CFR 410.40. They are ALS services provided by an entity that does not provide the ambulance transport . Under limited circumstances, these services can receive Medicare payment.
FW	Fixed Wing Air Ambulance (FW): Fixed wing air ambulance is provided when the patient's medical condition is such that transportation by either basic or advanced life support ground ambulance is not appropriate. In addition, fixed wing air ambulance may be necessary because the point of pick-up is inaccessible by land vehicle, or great distances or other obstacles (for example, heavy traffic) are involved in getting the patient to the nearest hospital with appropriate facilities.

RW	Rotary Wing Air Ambulance (RW): Rotary wing air ambulance is provided when the patient's medical condition is such that transportation by either basic or advanced life support ground ambulance is not appropriate. In addition, rotary wing air ambulance may be necessary because the point of pick-up is inaccessible by land vehicle, or great distances or other obstacles (for example, heavy traffic) are involved in getting the patient to the nearest hospital with appropriate facilities.
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