



Plain language summary

Skilled Care Services

Utilization Management Policy # 486

Plain Language Summaries are presented to supplement the associated clinical policy or guideline. These summaries are not a substitute for advice from your own healthcare provider.

What are skilled care services?

Skilled services are provided by a licensed health care professional (physical therapist, occupational therapist, physician, or chiropractor). These services include treatments, devices, strapping, etc. They require the abilities of a qualified health care provider that caregivers (aids, family members) or the patient cannot provide by themselves.

How were skilled services evaluated?

A work group of clinicians was assigned to review the available research. The internet was searched for guidance about skilled services. The work group independently examined the selected information. Broadly accepted standards were used. Additionally, the positions and guidelines of other professional and healthcare groups were evaluated. Before it was approved, the policy was presented to a series of committees that included independent health care practitioners.

What did the work group find?

The health care provider's clinical records must document the necessity for skilled care.

The deciding factors are always whether the services are considered reasonable, effective treatments for the patient's condition and require the skills of a qualified health care provider, or whether they can be safely and effectively carried out by nonskilled individuals.

What are unskilled or nonskilled service?

Nonskilled services include personal care – such as help with activities of daily living like bathing, eating, dressing, getting in/out of bed or chair, moving around, or using the bathroom. It may also include the kind of health care most people do for themselves e.g., using a hot pack.

Services such as general exercises to promote overall fitness and flexibility and activities to provide general motivation, are unskilled care services.

Services provided by practitioners/staff who are not qualified health care providers are not skilled services.

Services that are regularly performed by the patient to help maintain function are not skilled services.

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What are the conclusions?

Skilled care services are medically necessary when they are needed to:

- Improve a patient's current condition
- Prevent or slow further deterioration of the patient's condition
- Help a person keep, learn, or improve skills and functioning for daily living to maintain the patient's current condition

AND

- The services are considered to be an effective treatment for the patient's condition
- The services can only be safely and effectively performed by a qualified health care provider e.g., chiropractor, physical therapist, occupational therapist, or physician
- The plan of care is reasonable under accepted standards of care