205 – GROUND AMBULANCE TRANSPORTATION REIMBURSEMENT GUIDELINES FOR NON-CONTRACTED PROVIDERS

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Staff Responsible for Policy: DHCM Reimbursement

I. PURPOSE

This Policy applies to Acute Care, ALTCS/EPD, CRS, DCS/ CMDP (CMDP), DES/DDD (DDD), and RBHA Contractors. The purpose of this Policy is to provide ground ambulance transportation reimbursement guidelines. It is limited to AHCCCS Contractors and ambulance or emergent care transportation providers when a contract does not exist between these entities.

Refer to the AHCCCS Medical Policy Manual (AMPM) Chapter 300, Policy 310-BB for a general description of the transportation policy.

II. DEFINITIONS

For purposes of this policy the following definitions apply:

Advanced Life Support (ALS) 42 CFR 414.605, describes ALS as either transportation by ground ambulance vehicle, that has medically necessary supplies and services, and the treatment includes administration of at least three medications by intravenous push/bolus or by continuous infusion, excluding crystalloid, hypotonic, isotonic, and hypertonic solutions (Dextrose, Normal Saline, Ringer’s Lactate); or transportation, medically necessary supplies and services, and the provision of at least one ALS procedure:
1. Manual defibrillation/cardioversion,
2. Endotracheal intubation,
3. Central venous line,
4. Cardiac pacing,
5. Chest decompression,
6. Surgical airway, or
7. Intraosseous line.
AMBULANCE

Any publicly or privately owned surface (ground), water or air vehicle including a helicopter, that contains a stretcher and necessary medical equipment and supplies that is especially designed and constructed or modified and equipped to be used, maintained or operated primarily for the transportation of individuals who are sick, injured or wounded or who require medical monitoring or aid. “Ambulance” does not include a surface vehicle that is owned and operated by a sole proprietor, partnership, private corporation or municipal corporation for the emergency transportation and in–transit care of its employees or a vehicle to accommodate an incapacitated or disabled person who does not require medical monitoring, care or treatment during transport and that is not advertised as having medical equipment and supplies or qualified ambulance attendants as defined in A.R.S. §36-2201.

BASIC LIFE SUPPORT (BLS)

Transportation by ground ambulance vehicle and medically necessary supplies and services, plus the provision of BLS ambulance services. The ambulance must be staffed by an individual who is qualified in accordance with State and local laws as an emergency medical technician-basic (EMT–Basic) as described in 42 CFR 414.605.

EMERGENCY AMBULANCE SERVICES

Emergency ambulance services are as described in 9 A.A.C. 22, Article 2, 9 A.A.C. 25, and in 42 CFR 410.40 and 414.605.

EMERGENCY AMBULANCE TRANSPORTATION

Emergency ground and air ambulance services required to manage an emergency medical condition of an AHCCCS member at an emergency scene and transport to the nearest appropriate facility.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL CONDITION

Emergency medical condition is defined as the treatment for a medical condition, including emergency labor and delivery which manifests itself by acute symptoms of sufficient severity, including severe pain, such that a prudent layperson who possess an average knowledge of health and medicine, could reasonably expect that in the absence of immediate medical attention to result in:

1. Placing the member’s health in serious jeopardy,
2. Serious impairment to bodily functions, or
3. Serious dysfunction of any bodily organ or part.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

Emergency medical services means services provided for the treatment of an emergency medical condition.
EMT-Basic (EMT-B)  

The EMT-B provides basic life support without providing invasive procedures or cardiac monitoring or ALS procedures.

Under A.R.S. §36-2201 and 9 A.A.C. 25 and as administered by the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS), bureau of emergency medical services, the EMT-basic is certified to perform or provide all of the medical treatments, procedures, medication and techniques included in the U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Safety Administration EMT-B curriculum. In addition to the examples of BLS services/procedures in Section III(A)(2)(a), the following are examples of member conditions requiring the basic skill level of the EMT-B:

1. Labor and delivery in route to medical care (no history of complications),
2. ETOH (intoxication) and passed out due to intoxication.

EMT-Paramedic (EMT-P)  

The EMT-P is educated and capable to perform invasive procedures, heart monitoring and administer a wide variety of drugs and other ALS procedures.

Under A.R.S. §36-2201 and 9 A.A.C. 25 and as administered by the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS), Bureau of Emergency Medical Services, the EMT-P is certified to perform or provide all of the medical treatments, procedures, medication and techniques included in the U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Safety Administration EMT-P curriculum. In addition to the examples of ALS services/procedures noted in Section III(A)(1)(a)(4)(a) of this policy, the following are examples of member conditions requiring the advanced skill level of the paramedic:

1. Gunshot/stab wounds/major trauma,
2. Impending birth/complications of pregnancy,
3. Chest pain/heart attack,
4. Hemorrhage/shock/profuse bleeding,
5. Unconscious/coma/uncontrolled seizures/severe head injury,
6. Unresponsive/(found down),
7. Diabetic coma,
8. Stroke, or
9. Respiratory distress (respiratory arrest/asthma).

III. Policy

A. Ground Emergency Ambulance Transportation

Ambulance providers that have fees established by the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) are reimbursed by AHCCCS Contractors a percentage proscribed by law of the ambulance provider’s ADHS-approved fees for covered services. For ambulance
providers whose fees are not established by ADHS, the AHCCCS Capped Fee for Service (FFS) Schedule will be used.

Criteria and reimbursement processes for Advanced Life Support (ALS) and Basic Life Support (BLS) are as follows.

1. Advanced Life Support (ALS) level

   a. In order for ambulance services to be reimbursable at the ALS level, all of the following criteria must be satisfied:
      i. The ambulance must be ALS licensed and certified in accordance with A.R.S. §36-2212 and 9 A.A.C.13, Articles 10 and 11
      ii. ALS certified personnel such as the EMT-P described in Section II are present
      iii. ALS services/procedures are medically necessary, based upon the member’s symptoms and medical condition (refer to examples in Section II under EMT-P) at the time of the transport and

   1) ALS services/procedures performed by an EMT-P include but are not limited to:
      a) Manual defibrillation/cardioversion,
      b) Endotracheal intubation,
      c) Esophageal obdurate airway,
      d) Monitor central venous line,
      e) Cardiac pacing,
      f) Chest decompression,
      g) Surgical airway,
      h) Intraosseous line,
      i) Gastric suction,
      j) Parenteral fluid, as a directed medical therapy and not for the purpose of maintaining an intravenous line,
      k) Medication administration excluding oxygen,
      l) Required, medically necessary pre-hospital phlebotomy,
      m) Placement/establishment of a peripheral venous catheter, and/or
      n) Basic cardiac monitoring.

   2) Services/procedures that do not qualify as ALS include, but are not limited to:
      a) Parenteral fluid, for the purpose of maintaining an open line or other non-therapeutic rate of fluid administration,
      b) Oxygen delivery (by any means),
      c) Pulse oximetry,
      d) Blood glucose testing, and/or
      e) Assisting a member in the administration of their own home medications.

   b. Emergency ground ambulance claims are subject to medical review. Claims must be submitted with documentation of medical necessity and a copy of the trip report evidencing:
      i. Medical condition, signs and symptoms, procedures, treatment,
      ii. Transportation origin, destination, and mileage (statute miles),
iii. Supplies, and
iv. Necessity of attendant, if applicable.

Claims submitted without such documentation are subject to denial.

The Contractor must process the claims within the timeframes established in 9 A.A.C. 22, Article 7. Emergency transportation ordered by the Contractor cannot be denied upon receipt. This claim is not subject to further medical review.

2. Basic Life Support (BLS) level

a. In order for ambulance services to be reimbursable at the BLS level, all of the following criteria must be satisfied:
   i. The ambulance must be BLS licensed and certified in accordance, A.R.S. §36-2212 and A.A.C. R9-25-201,
   ii. BLS certified personnel, for example, the EMT-B described in Section II are present,
   iii. BLS services/procedures, are medically necessary, based upon the member’s symptoms and medical condition at the time of the transport, and
   iv. BLS services/procedures and authorized treatment activities were provided. BLS services/procedures performed by an EMT-B include but are not limited to:
      1) Monitoring intravenous lines during interfacility transfers.
      2) Blood glucose monitoring,
      3) Utilizing the Automatic External Defibrillator (AED),

b. Assisting a patient to take the following prescribed medications (must be the patient’s prescription)
   1) Nitroglycerin,
   2) Auto injectable epinephrine,
   3) Bronchodilating inhalers.

c. Emergency ground ambulance claims are subject to medical review. Claims must be submitted with documentation of medical necessity and a copy of the trip report evidencing:
   i. Medical condition, signs and symptoms, procedures, treatment,
   ii. Transportation origin, destination, and mileage,
   iii. Supplies, and
   iv. Necessity of attendant, if applicable.

Claims submitted without such documentation are subject to denial.

The Contractor must process the claims within the timeframes established in 9 A.A.C. 22, Article 7. Emergency transportation ordered by the Contractor cannot be denied upon receipt. This claim is not subject to further medical review.
B. NON-EMERGENT GROUND AMBULANCE TRANSPORTATION-PAYMENT PROVISIONS

1. Non-emergent ambulance transportation is subject to review for medical necessity by the Contractor. Medical necessity criteria is based upon the medical condition of the member.

   Non-emergent transportation by ambulance is appropriate if:
   a. Documentation supports that other methods of transportation are contraindicated, and
   b. The member’s medical condition, regardless of bed confinement, requires the medical treatment provided by the qualified staff in an ambulance.

   Non-emergent transportation ordered by the Contractor cannot be denied upon receipt. This claim is not subject to further medical review.

2. At the Contractor’s discretion, non-emergent ambulance transport may not require prior authorization or notification. This may include after-hours calls. An example is an ambulance company which receives a call from the emergency room to transport a nursing facility member back to the facility and the Contractor cannot be reached.

3. All Hospital-to-Hospital transfers will be paid, minimally, at the BLS rate, unless the transfer requires ALS level of service. This includes transportation between general and specialty hospitals.

4. Transportation reimbursement will be reduced to the level of the appropriate alternative transportation when services provided do not qualify as ALS or BLS (Refer to Section II, Definitions), or the ALS/BLS services rendered at the time of transport are deemed not medically necessary. If the transportation vendor does not have established non-ALS or non-BLS levels, claims will be paid at the AHCCCS established capped-fee-for-service amount for the appropriate alternative transportation service for example: taxi or van (ambulatory, wheelchair or stretcher).

IV. REFERENCES

- Acute Care Contract, Section D
- ALTCS/EPD Contract Section D
- CRS, Contract Section D
- DCS/CMDP, Contract Section D
- DES/DDD, Contract Section D
- RBHA Contract, Scope of Work
- 9 A.A.C. 22, Article 2
- 9 A.A.C. 22, Article 7
- 9 A.A.C. 25
- A.R.S. §36-2201
- A.R.S. §36-2202
- A.R.S. §36-2212
- 42 CFR 414
- 42 CFR 414.40
- 42 CFR 414.605
- AMPM, Chapter 300, Policy 310-BB, Transportation