

Does Medicare reimburse for palliative care provided by PAs?

Unfortunately, the answer is no. Under the current Medicare hospice regulations, PAs are not covered providers under the hospice benefit. PAs cannot order or provide medical services under the hospice benefit. The AAPA has been working to add PAs to the list of providers covered for medical services under the hospice benefit as well as allowing PAs to order/certify hospice care. PAs can provide medical care to hospice beneficiaries for medical conditions outside of the condition for which they are utilizing the hospice benefit.

According to Jeremy Leffler, Assistant Director, Federal Affairs, the AAPA Federal Affairs staff has been diligently working on trying to change the law so that PA's may be able to order home health, hospice, and skilled nursing facility care. Unfortunately, there is hesitation to reopen the debate on Medicare since Congress just passed the Medicare Modernization Act. Congress may be planning to fix this type of problem with Medicare soon. The Federal Affairs staff met with appropriate congressional staffers and members who have jurisdiction over this issue. They are hopeful to secure this technical correction in should Medicare be reopened.

Each private payer determines their own policy on PAs and hospice care. It is possible that a private payer will reimburse a PA for home visits or palliative care. (i.e.: Blue Cross Blue Shield might reimburse PAs for providing hospice care, United Health Care might not.) You would need to check with the individual payer to determine their coverage policies.