

Professional Practice Corner

Can PAs order durable medical equipment?

Yes, HFCA states that PAs are allowed to authorize the Certificate of Medical Necessity for Durable Medical Equipment. According to a letter to the AAPA from HFCA dated April 25, 2000, “ Nothing (in the Balanced Budget) Act (of 1997) prohibits PAs from authorizing the Certificate of Medical Necessity for DME. Therefore if a PA is authorized by state law to provide such services, the PA may perform these services and the PAs employer may bill the local Medicare Carrier for the medically necessary services”. Wisconsin Med Chapter 8 does not specifically prohibit PAs from authorizing DME.

Can PAs give verbal orders?

Yes, PAs can give verbal orders. There is nothing in PA state law (Med Chapter 8) that addresses the form of orders. According to a Wisconsin Nursing Board ruling from 1981, “there is no legal difference between the order of a physician and a physician assistant. The form of the order (written, verbal or telephone) is a practical matter not a legal one.” This, translated, means that according to the Wisconsin nursing board, PA verbal, telephone and written orders are all legal. BUT, your hospital may only specifically allow verbal orders from physicians despite this ruling. A copy of this ruling is available if you would like to address this with your hospital credentialing board.