

NHIC, Corp. Evaluation & Management (E/M) Coding Requirements

NHIC, Corp. Medical Review offers this article and the attached worksheet to assist you in understanding the documentation and policy requirements associated with Evaluation & Management Services. This worksheet is a *tool* used by NHIC Medical Reviewers when adjudicating claims. Please refer to the attached NHIC Evaluation and Management Coding Worksheet which is based on the (CMS) 1995 and 1997 Guidelines.

This reference tool is intended to serve as a useful supplement to other manuals published by NHIC, and not as a replacement. The information provided in no way represents a guarantee of payment. Benefits for all claims will be based on the patient's eligibility, provisions of the Law, and regulations and instructions from Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). It is the responsibility of each provider or practitioner submitting claims to become familiar with Medicare coverage and requirements. All information is subject to change as federal regulations and Medicare Part B policy guidelines, mandated by CMS, are revised or implemented.

Medical Necessity of the service is the overarching criterion for payment in addition to the individual requirements of a CPT Code (CMS Manual, Publication 100-4, Chapter 12, Section 30.6.1).

Medicare Contractors may only allow payment for medically necessary and reasonable services defined by Section 1862(a) (1) (A) of the Social Security Act. Medicare Regulations indicate that no Medicare payment shall be made for items or services that are not "reasonable" and necessary for the diagnosis or treatment of illness or injury or to improve a missing or non-functioning body member. Services performed "in the absence of signs or symptoms" are excluded from payment under the Medicare Program.

Healthcare providers and practitioners who receive Medicare payment either in full or in part, have certain obligations. Those obligations should ensure that services rendered are:

- Provided economically and only when, and to the extent that, they are medically necessary.
- Meeting professionally recognized standards of health care supported by appropriate evidence of medical necessity and quality of care.

E/M Services Contain Seven Components

The E/M codes recognize seven components that translate into the work involved and, subsequently, determine the actual code selection. The first 3 of these components (history, examination, and medical decision making) are considered the **key components** in selecting a level of E/M services. The next 4 components (counseling, coordination of care, nature of the presenting problem, and time) are considered contributory factors in the majority of encounters.

Establishing Medical Necessity

The chief complaint or reason for the encounter establishes the medical necessity and reasonableness for services. It is a concise statement describing the symptom, problem, or condition, diagnosis, physician recommended need(s), or other factor that is the reason for the encounter, **usually** stated in the patient's words. It is sometimes referred to as "presenting problem." (Documentation Guidelines 1997)

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The medical necessity and reasonableness of the level of service billed is directly correlated to the nature of the presenting problem.

In addition to the medical necessity and reasonableness of an E/M service, the components of History, Examination, and Medical Decision Making are the 3 key components in selecting the appropriate level of service. What this means is that we may consider the frequency of visits when evaluating the medical need for a more detailed history and examination. It is the interval history that is important, not the repeating of the family history or the patient's surgical history.

Medical Record Documentation

Medical record documentation must be complete, legible, and clearly indicate the rendered service, the extent of the service(s) performed, and must include information that supports the medical necessity of the service provided. The documentation of each patient encounter should include: the reason for the encounter and relevant history; physical examination findings; test results; assessment and clinical impression or diagnosis; plan of care; and date and legible identity of the provider. The purpose of medical record documentation, in general, is to provide a permanent record of each patient's medical condition and treatment for medical, legal, and financial reasons. Documentation must be as clear and complete possible, so that it may be read and understood accurately. Medical record documentation is required to record pertinent facts, findings, and observations about an individual's health history, including past and present illnesses, examinations, tests, treatments, and outcomes. The medical record chronologically documents the care of the patient and is an important element contributing to high quality care. Payers insist on accurate medical record documentation to ensure that beneficiaries have received quality care and that services reported are consistent with the insurance coverage. The medical record facilitates:

- The ability of the physician and other health care professionals to evaluate and plan the patient's immediate treatment and to monitor his/her health care over time.
- Continuity of care among physicians and other health care professionals involved in the patient care.
- Appropriate utilization review and quality of care evaluations.

It cannot be stressed enough that the volume of documentation is not the sole indication of the level of service. Documentation that is aimed to meet the guidelines for payment but is excessive for the treatment of the patient on the visit in question will not increase the level assigned to that visit.

Chief Complaint (CC) or Reason for Encounter

The medical record should clearly reflect the chief complaint.

- Services performed "in the absence of signs or symptoms" are excluded from payment under the Medicare Program. The CC is a concise statement describing the symptoms, problem, condition, diagnosis, physician recommended need (s) or other factor that is the reason for the encounter, usually stated in the patient's words.
- ♦ The CC establishes and supports the medical necessity and reasonableness for the services billed to the Medicare program.

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History of Present Illness (HPI)

HPI is a chronological description of the development of the patient's present illness from the first sign and/or symptom(s) to the present. HPI's are distinguished by the amount of detail needed to accurately characterize the clinical problem(s). Below are the 8 elements of HPI and a brief description of the information included in each:

- Location describes where the body symptom is occurring
- ◆ Quality is the character of the symptom
- ♦ Severity is a rank of the symptom/pain on a scale of 1-10. Severity can also be described with terms such as severe, slight, worst I have ever encountered, etc.
- Duration describes how long the symptom/pain has been present or how long it lasts.
- ◆ Timing describes when the pain/symptom occurs
- ◆ Context is the situation associated with the pain/symptom
- ♦ Modifying factors are things done to make the symptom/pain worse or better
- Associated signs and symptoms describe the symptom/pain and other things that happen when this symptom/pain occurs

Brief HPI consists of 1 to 3 elements of the HPI. Extended HPI consists of at least 4 elements of the HPI or the status of at least 3 chronic or inactive conditions.

Review of Systems (ROS)

ROS is an inventory of body systems obtained through a series of questions seeking to identify signs and/or symptoms that the patient may be experiencing or has experienced. Ancillary staff may record the ROS or it may be a form completed by the patient; however, **there must be documentation by the physician** confirming the information recorded by others.

Per the American Medical Association (AMA) Documentation Guidelines for Evaluation and Management Services, ROS inquires about the system(s) directly related to the problem(s) identified in the HPI plus additional body systems. At a minimum the patient's positive and pertinent negative responses should be documented. For services that require a complete ROS at least 10 organ systems must be reviewed with positive or pertinent negative responses individually documented. For the remaining systems, a notation indicating "all other systems are negative" is permissible. In the absence of such a notation, at least 10 systems must be individually documented.



For purposes of ROS, the following systems are recognized:

Constitutional	Musculoskeletal
Eyes	Integumentary
Ears, Nose, Mouth, Throat	Neurological
Cardiovascular	Psychiatric
Respiratory	Endocrine
GI Gastrointestinal	Hem/Lymph (hematologic/lymphatic)
GU Genitourinary	Allergy/Immunologic

Review of Systems (ROS)

A problem-pertinent ROS inquires about the system directly related to the problem identified in the HPI.

An extended ROS inquires about the system directly related to the problem(s) in the HPI and a limited number of additional systems. (See CMS 1997 Guidelines)

A complete ROS inquires about the system(s) directly related to the problem(s) identified in the HPI plus all additional body systems (10 or more).

Past, Family, and Social History (PFSH)

Past, Family, and Social History (PFSH): Consists of 3 areas: past history, family history, and social history. If the physician is unable to obtain a history from the patient or other source, the record should describe the patient's condition or other circumstance that precludes obtaining a history.

Examination (EX) The level of E/M services are based on four types of examinations. Key Components are according to the 1995 and 1997 Guidelines.

Problem-Focused examination documentation requirements are at least 1 of the following: a limited examination of 1 affected body area/organ system and other related system(s), (1995); 1-5 elements identified in 1 or more organ system(s) or body area(s), (1997).

Expanded Problem-Focused examination requirements are at least 1 of the following: a limited exam of the affected body area/organ system and other related system(s), (1995); at least 6 elements identified in 1 or more organ system or body area, (1997).

Detailed examination documentation requirements are at least 1 of the following: an extended exam of affected area(s) & other symptomatic/related organ system(s), (1995); at least 6 organ systems/body areas, and with each system/area selected, documentation of at least 2 elements is expected, (1997); at least 12 elements identified in 2 or more organ system or body areas, (1997).

Comprehensive examination documentation requirements are at least 1 of the following: a general multi- (8 or more) organ systems exam or complete exam of single organ system, (1995).

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All identified elements in the bold-edged boxes (1997 E/M Exam Guidelines) should be performed. Documentation requirements for the specialty exams state all of the elements in a shaded box and at least 1 element in an unshaded box.

The major differences between the 1995 and 1997 Guidelines for E/M Coding lie in the documentation of the physical examination. The 1995 Guidelines are less precise. For example, they allow the physician (and the auditor) to choose their own definitions of "detailed" examination of an organ system. On audit, this vagueness often leads to differences of opinion – even among expert coders - on the appropriate level of examination on any given chart. The 1997 guidelines are much more explicit, listing specific elements and specific counts on these elements that count toward each specific level of physical examination.

You may use either the 1995 or 1997 Guidelines. CMS has instructed its auditors to use whichever set of results is most in the physicians' favor. Thus, you may use either set of E/M Guidelines to code any given chart; however, you may not mix and match the aspects of each set of guidelines to code any given chart. I.e., you may not use the level of history from the 1997 Guidelines and the level of physical examination from the 1995. You can find the CMS Evaluation and Management Services Guide at the following website: http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNProducts/downloads/eval_mgmt_serv_guide.pdf

Medical Decision Making (MDM)

The documentation of the complexity of medical decision making refers to the complexity of establishing a diagnosis and/or selecting a management option as measured by the following:

- The number of possible diagnoses that require active management or affect treatment (Treatment Options.)
- ◆ The amount and/or complexity of data medical records, diagnostic tests, and/or information that must be obtained, reviewed and analyzed. The complexity of decision making should be documented accordingly and not be inferred or implied.
- The risk of significant complications, morbidity and/or mortality, as well as the co-morbidities, associated with the patient's presenting problems, the diagnostic procedure(s) and/or the possible management options.

For each encounter, an assessment, clinical impression, or diagnosis should be documented. Physician medical decision-making is critical to determine the overall level of care provided during a patient encounter. Medical decision-making may vary on a visit-to-visit basis depending on the patient's condition and what the physician performed that day. The fact that the patient has an underlying disease or co-morbidity is significant only if their presence significantly increases the complexity of the medical decision-making. Only conditions that impact the encounter are determining factors that affect the level of E/M service. The current status of the patient's diagnosis is also a determining factor, e.g., stable, improved, worsening, etc. Clinical impressions or diagnoses need to be written, not implied. Diagnoses count in the MDM leveling only if they impact the presenting problem. The status of diagnoses is of primary importance; if not written, the assumption is that they are improving or stable.



Diagnosis:

- A. For a presenting problem with an established diagnosis the record should reflect whether the problem is: improved, well-controlled, resolving, or resolved;
- B. For a presenting problem without an established diagnosis, the assessment or clinical impression may be stated in the form of a differential diagnosis or as "possible," "probable," or "rule out" diagnosis.

In the case where counseling and/or coordination of care dominates (more than 50%) of the physician/patient and/or family encounter (face-to-face time in the office or outpatient setting, floor/unit time in the hospital or nursing facility), time is considered the key or controlling factor to qualify for a particular level of E/M services. In general, to bill an E/M code, the physician must complete at least 2 out of 3 criteria applicable to the type/level of service provided. However, the physician must document the total length of time of the encounter (face to face or floor time, as appropriate), the time spent with the patient providing counseling and/or coordination of care, and a description of the coordination of care counseling provided. Documentation must be in sufficient detail to support the claim.

Additional Resources Available:

- NHIC, Corp. Evaluation and Management Services Billing Guide available at: http://www.medicarenhic.com/providers/pubs/emservicesgd.pdf Most of the information in this guide is based on Publication 100-1, Chapter 4; Publication 100-2, Chapter 7 and 15; and Publication 100-4, Chapters 1, 11 and 12 of the CMS Internet Only Manual (IOM). The CMS IOM provides detailed regulations and coverage guidelines of the Medicare program. To access the manual, visit the CMS website at http://www.cms.hhs.gov/manuals/.
- American Medial Association CPT Coding: http://www.amapress.org

Reference Tool:

The document on the following page is the NHIC, Corp. Evaluation & Management Coding Worksheet Tool that is used by our Nurse Reviewers and Medical Consultants when determining the level of service for adjudicating claims.

12/03/2009

Code Billed: _____Consult: Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, ALL 3 must be documented (Request ☐ Report ☐ Recommendation ☐) **Chief Complaint:** Bene Initials: D.O.S. **HPI** (history of present illness) elements: ☐ Location ■ Duration ■ Modifying Factors Onset of .symptoms to **Extended** Where is problem? What have you done to alleviate or **Brief** worsen symptoms? present. 1-3 HPI elements ≥4 HPI elements or ☐ Associated Signs/Symptoms status of ≥ 3 chronic ☐ Severity ☐ Timing How bad on a scale 1/10 When/how often What else is bothering you? or inactive conditions Quality Sharp/dull/ hot/dry ☐ Context What are you doing when sxs occurs? **ROS (Review of Systems)** None 1 ROS Extended Complete Constitutional ☐ Card/Vasc ■ Musculo ☐ Psych ☐ "All Others 2-9 ROS ≥ 10 ROS or Negative" some Eyes Respiratory Integument Endo systems + statement Ears, Nose □ GI □ GU Hem/Lymph "all others Mouth, Throat negative" HISTORY Neuro Allerg/Imm. No PFSH is required: Subsequent Hospital and Subsequent Nursing Established/ Facility Care services require an interval history only. 1 PFSH Subsequent None 2 PFSH Past History (the pt's past experiences w/illnesses, operations, injuries, *E.D. treatments, medications & allergies) **Family History** (review of medical events in the pt's family including diseases which are hereditary or put the pt at risk) None New or 1-2 **PFSH PFSH** Initial Social History (an age appropriate review of past and current activities) Circle the entry farthest to the right for each history area. To determine history level, draw a line down the column with the circle farthest to the left. EXP. PROB. PROB. COMPRE-Important Note: Allow a comprehensive history if the physician is unable to obtain a history **FOCUSED FOCUSED HENSIVE** DETATI ED from the patient or other source. The record should describe the patient's condition or circumstance that precludes obtaining history. ΡF **FPF** D C *99281-99285: No distinction is made between new & established patients in the E.D. 1997 Guidelines - General Multi System 1997 Guidelines - Single Organ System Exam Level PROBLEM FOCUSED (PF) 1-5 elements identified by • 1-5 elements identified by • ≥ 6 elements identified by • ≥ 6 elements identified by • **EXPANDED PF (EPF)** ≥ 2 elements identified by • from any 6 areas/systems ≥ 12 elements identified by • EXCEPT OR ≥12 elements identified by • from ≥2 areas/systems ≥ 9 elements identified by • for eye & psych exams **DETAILED (D)** Document all elements in bolded outlined system boxes and COMPREHENSIVE (C) ≥ 2 elements identified by • from 9 areas/systems ≥ 1 element in unbolded system boxes 1995 Guidelines Affected Body Areas (BA) Organ Systems (OS) ☐ Head/Face ☐ Constitutional Skin 1 (BA) or 2-7 (OS) 2-7 (OS) 8 or more (OS) and/or (BA) and/or (BA) (OS) ☐ Neck ☐ Eves ☐ Neuro (Extended (A general ☐ Abdomen Ears, nose, mouth, throat ☐ Psych (Limited (Limited exam of multisystem exam of exam of affected exam or Chest + breast / axillae ☐ Cardiovascular ☐ Hem/Lymph/Immune affected BA affected BA BA(s) and complete or OS) or OS and other or exam of a other related single ☐ Genital/groin/buttocks Respiratory symptomatic OS(s)organ or related system) ☐ Back, include spine ☐ GI OS(s)☐ Extremity/(ies) L / R Upper □ GU PF **EPF** D C L/R Lower ■ Musculo

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Α					Amount and/or Complexity of Data to be Reviewed				
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	roblem (worsening)	Max = 2	2		Discussion of test results with performing physician				
	problem (to Provider) (no add'l workup)	Max=1	3				to obtain history from	someone else 1	
New	New problem (to Provider) (additional workup) Max=1 4						s <u>or</u> get Hx from some		
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₩	insect bite, tinea corporis		 Cl 	nest x-	rays, KOH prep	p or EKG/EEG	 Gargles 		
MINIMAL					is or Ultrasoun		Elastic bandages		
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4 ≥	hypertension, non-insulin dependent diab					aging studies with	factors		
TOM	cataract, BPH				e.g., barium en		Physical therapy		
	Acute uncomplicated illness or injury e.g. cystitis, allergic rhinitis, simple sprain					sies or Skin biopsies s requiring arterial	Occupational therapyIV fluids without additives		
5	eysuus, anergie riiinius, siinpie sprain			incture		requiring arteriar	1 V Hulus Without a	uditives	
MODERATE	 One or more chronic illnesses with mild exacerbation, progression or side effects of treatment Two or more stable chronic illnesses Undiagnosed new problem with uncertain prognosis e.g., lump in breast Acute illness with systemic symptoms e.g pyelonephritis pneumonitis, colitis Acute complicated injury e.g., head injury brief loss of consciousness 	of	 str Di ris Ca an Ol 	ress testiagnosti sk fact eep ned aridova d no id teriognosti	or, fetal contractic endoscopies fors edle or incision ascular imaging dentified risk faram, cardiac coffuid from body	g studies with contrast actors <i>e.g.</i> ,	 Minor surgery with identified risk fac Elective major surgery (open percuta or endoscopic) with no identified risk factors) Prescription drug management Therapeutic nuclear medicine IV fluids with additives Closed treatment of fracture or disloc without manipulation 		
нЭін	One or more chronic illnesses with severe exacerbation, progression or side effects of treatment Acute or chronic illnesses or injuries that pose a threat to life or bodily function e.g. multiple trauma, acute MI, pulmonary emsevere respiratory distress, progressive serheumatoid arthritis, psychiatric illness w/potential threat to self or others, peritor acute renal failure An abrupt change in neurological status eseizure, TIA, weakness, sensory loss	may , bolus, vere nitis,	Cardiovascular im with identified risk Cardiac electophys				or endoscopic) with Emergency major s percutaneous or ene Parenteral controlle Drug therapy requifor toxicity	doscopic) ed substances ring intensive monitoring uscitate or de-escalate	
Α	Circle the Total number in sec	ction A	<u> </u>	≤ 1 Mi	nimal	2 Limited	3 Multiple	≥ 4 Extensive	
В	Circle the Total number in sec	ction B	≤ 1 N	/linima	al or None	2 Limited	3 Multiple	≥ 4 Extensive	
C Circle the Level in section C Minit				mal	Low	Moderate	High		
Co	Complexity Level of Medical Decision Making (Mdm) STRAIGHTFO					LOW L	MODERATE M	HIGH H	
	a line down the column with 2 or 3 circles and						mn with the center circle =	= level of Mdm	
If the encou	physician documents total time and suggest unter, time may determine level of service. Do nent, instructions, compliance, and/or risk red	s that cou ocumenta uction.	inseling ition ma	or co ay refe	ordinating ca er to: prognos	re dominates (greater sis, differential diagno	than 50%) the sis, risks, benefits of	If both answers are	
Does	documentation reveal total time? Time: Fac Unit/floor				etting	☐ Yes	☐ No	"yes," you may select the level	
Does	documentation describe the content of couns				care?	☐ Yes	□ No	based on time.	

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PLEASE NOTE: Time factors are indicated by CPT code followed by **-xx** (example: 99201-10 indicates 10 minutes)

Directions: Transfer the history, exam and medical decision making results to the correct chart below & follow the instructions for that Code family

New Office/Outp	oatient Vis	its & Offi	ce/Inpatie	Itations	Established Patient Office/Outpatient Visits					
Level		nent identifie	n the columed which is to the lo	he farthest		If a column has 2 or 3 circles, draw a line down the column and circle the code OR draw a line down the column with the center circle and circle the code				
нх	PF	EPF	D	С	С	Minimal problem that may	PF	EPF	D	С
EX	PF	EPF	D	С	С	not require presence	PF	EPF	D	С
MDM	SF	SF	L	M	Н	of MD/DO	SF	L	M	Н
CPT Code	99201- 10 99241- 15 99251- 20	99202- 20 99242- 30 99252- 40	99203 -30 99243 -40 99253 -55	99204 -45 99244 -60 99254 -80	99205 -60 99245 -80 99255 -110	99211- 5	99212 -10	99213- 15	99214- 25	99215 -40

Level	Draw a line o component idei (Visits & Obse down the column w ntified which is the leveled by the lowe see are PER DAY Co	hich has a key farthest to the left est)	Subsequent Hosp. If a column has 2 or 3 circles, draw a line down the column and circle the code OR draw a line down the column with the center circle and circle the code This is a PER DAY CODE			
нх	D or C	С	С	PF interval	D interval		
EX	D or C	С	С	PF	EPF	D	
MDM	SF/L	М	н	SF/L	М	н	
CPT Code	99221-30 99218 99234	99222-50 99219 99235	99223-70 99220 99236	99231- 15	99232- 25	99233- 35	

		EMERGENCY CARE SERVICES										
	Draw a line down the o	Draw a line down the column which has a key component identified which is the farthest to the left (leveled by the lowest)										
нх	PF	EPF	EPF	D	С							
EX	PF	EPF	EPF	D	С							
MDM	SF	L	М	М	н							
CPT Code	99281	99282	99283	99284	99285							

Abbreviation Legend: CC = Chief Complaint	ROS = Review of System	PFSH = (Past, Family,	Social) History
HX = History	EX = Exam	Mdm = Medical Decision	,
PF = Problem Focused	EPF = Expanded Problem Focused	D = Detailed	C = Comprehensive
SF = Straightforward	L = Low	M = Moderate	H = High

Additional Comments:

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Directions: Transfer history, exam and medical decision making results to appropriate chart below and follow the specific instructions for chart.

The Nursing Facility Care Codes are PER DAY CODES, time factors effective 2008

	Initial Nurs	ing Facility Ca	are	Subsequent Nursing Facility Care				
Level		vn the column whic ntified which is the the lowest)	•	If a column has 2 or 3 circles, draw a line down the column and circle the code OR draw a line down the column with the center circle and circle the code				
нх	D	С	С	PF interval	EPF interval	D interval	C interval	
EX	D	С	С	PF	EPF	D	С	
MDM	L	М	н	SF	L	M	н	
CPT Code	99304-25	99305-35	99306-45	99307-10	99308-15	99309-25	99310-35	

New Patier	nt Home/Do	miciliary	/Custodi	Established Ho	me/Domiciliary	//Custodial/R	est Home Etc.		
	Draw a line do identified whi lowest).					If a column has 2 or 3 circles, draw a line down the column and circle the code OR draw a line down the column with the center circle and circle the code			
нх	HX PF EPF D C C				PF interval	EPF interval	D interval	C interval	
EX	PF	EPF	D	С	С	PF	EPF	D	С
MDM	SF	SF	L	М	Н	SF	L	М	M to H
CPT Code	99341- 20 99324- 20	99342 -30 99325 -30	99343- 45 99326- 45	99344 -60 99327 -60	99345- 75 99328- 75	99347- 15 99334- 15	99348- 25 99335- 25	99349- 40 99336- 40	99350- 60 99337- 60

Abbreviation Legend: CC = Chief Complaint HX = History PF = Problem Focused SF = Straightforward	ROS = Review of System EX = Exam EPF = Expanded Problem Focused L = Low	PFSH = (Past, Family, Mdm = Medical Decisi D = Detailed M = Moderate	
Additional Comments:			