



2021 Coding Reminders

Discharge Services

For inpatient discharge services, total duration of time spent must be documented in order to report 99238 or 99239. Inpatient discharge services are not reportable if time has not been clearly documented to support the level of service billed.

CPT Code	Code Description
99238	Hospital discharge day management, 30 minutes or less
99239	Hospital discharge day management, more than 30 minutes

Chief Complaint

A chief complaint must be clearly documented within the note for all Evaluation and Management (E/M) services, which includes encounters during hospital admissions. If a patient is admitted to the facility setting, providers must include a chief complaint and HPI to support medical necessity for their encounter with the patient. If a chief complaint has not been documented the service would be considered unbillable unless the encounter is for an annual wellness or other preventive visit.

Per Palmetto GBA, "A chief complaint (CC) is a concise statement describing the symptom, problem, condition, diagnosis, physician recommended return or other factor that is the reason for the patient encounter. The extent of the information gathered for the CC and history component is dependent upon clinical judgment and the nature of the presenting problem."

Initial Hospital Documentation Requirements

Documentation requirements for hospital-based services are NOT changing in 2021. CPT guidelines for initial hospital services will still require appropriate documentation of all three key components.

The key components of E/M, which include services billed for initial hospital care, are:

1. History
2. Examination
3. Medical decision-making