

of Pub. L. 116-260, set out as an Effective Date of 2020 Amendment note under section 8902 of Title 5, Government Organization and Employees.

§ 1185f. Ending surprise air ambulance bills

(a) In general

In the case of a participant or beneficiary who is in a group health plan or group health insurance coverage offered by a health insurance issuer and who receives air ambulance services from a nonparticipating provider (as defined in section 1185e(a)(3)(G) of this title) with respect to such plan or coverage, if such services would be covered if provided by a participating provider (as defined in such section) with respect to such plan or coverage—

(1) the cost-sharing requirement with respect to such services shall be the same requirement that would apply if such services were provided by such a participating provider, and any coinsurance or deductible shall be based on rates that would apply for such services if they were furnished by such a participating provider;

(2) such cost-sharing amounts shall be counted towards the in-network deductible and in-network out-of-pocket maximum amount under the plan or coverage for the plan year (and such in-network deductible shall be applied) with respect to such items and services so furnished in the same manner as if such cost-sharing payments were with respect to items and services furnished by a participating provider; and

(3) the group health plan or health insurance issuer, respectively, shall—

(A) not later than 30 calendar days after the bill for such services is transmitted by such provider, send to the provider, an initial payment or notice of denial of payment; and

(B) pay a total plan or coverage payment, in accordance with, if applicable, subsection (b)(6), directly to such provider furnishing such services to such participant, beneficiary, or enrollee that is, with application of any initial payment under subparagraph (A), equal to the amount by which the out-of-network rate (as defined in section 1185e(a)(3)(K) of this title) for such services and year involved exceeds the cost-sharing amount imposed under the plan or coverage, respectively, for such services (as determined in accordance with paragraphs (1) and (2)).

(b) Determination of out-of-network rates to be paid by health plans; independent dispute resolution process

(1) Determination through open negotiation

(A) In general

With respect to air ambulance services furnished in a year by a nonparticipating provider, with respect to a group health plan or health insurance issuer offering group health insurance coverage, and for which a payment is required to be made by the plan or coverage pursuant to subsection (a)(3), the provider or plan or coverage may, during the 30-day period beginning on the day the

provider receives a payment or a statement of denial of payment from the plan or coverage regarding a claim for payment for such service, initiate open negotiations under this paragraph between such provider and plan or coverage for purposes of determining, during the open negotiation period, an amount agreed on by such provider, and such plan or coverage for payment (including any cost-sharing) for such service. For purposes of this subsection, the open negotiation period, with respect to air ambulance services, is the 30-day period beginning on the date of initiation of the negotiations with respect to such services.

(B) Accessing independent dispute resolution process in case of failed negotiations

In the case of open negotiations pursuant to subparagraph (A), with respect to air ambulance services, that do not result in a determination of an amount of payment for such services by the last day of the open negotiation period described in such subparagraph with respect to such services, the provider or group health plan or health insurance issuer offering group health insurance coverage that was party to such negotiations may, during the 4-day period beginning on the day after such open negotiation period, initiate the independent dispute resolution process under paragraph (2) with respect to such item or service. The independent dispute resolution process shall be initiated by a party pursuant to the previous sentence by submission to the other party and to the Secretary of a notification (containing such information as specified by the Secretary) and for purposes of this subsection, the date of initiation of such process shall be the date of such submission or such other date specified by the Secretary pursuant to regulations that is not later than the date of receipt of such notification by both the other party and the Secretary.

(2) Independent dispute resolution process available in case of failed open negotiations

(A) Establishment

Not later than 1 year after December 27, 2020, the Secretary, jointly with the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Secretary of the Treasury, shall establish by regulation one independent dispute resolution process (referred to in this subsection as the “IDR process”) under which, in the case of air ambulance services with respect to which a provider or group health plan or health insurance issuer offering group health insurance coverage submits a notification under paragraph (1)(B) (in this subsection referred to as a “qualified IDR air ambulance services”), a certified IDR entity under paragraph (4) determines, subject to subparagraph (B) and in accordance with the succeeding provisions of this subsection, the amount of payment under the plan or coverage for such services furnished by such provider.

(B) Authority to continue negotiations

Under the independent dispute resolution process, in the case that the parties to a determination for qualified IDR air ambulance services agree on a payment amount for such services during such process but before the date on which the entity selected with respect to such determination under paragraph (4) makes such determination under paragraph (5), such amount shall be treated for purposes of section 1185e(a)(3)(K)(ii) of this title as the amount agreed to by such parties for such services. In the case of an agreement described in the previous sentence, the independent dispute resolution process shall provide for a method to determine how to allocate between the parties to such determination the payment of the compensation of the entity selected with respect to such determination.

(C) Clarification

A nonparticipating provider may not, with respect to an item or service furnished by such provider, submit a notification under paragraph (1)(B) if such provider is exempt from the requirement under subsection (a) of section 300gg-132 of title 42 with respect to such item or service pursuant to subsection (b) of such section.

(3) Treatment of batching of services

The provisions of section 1185e(c)(3) of this title shall apply with respect to a notification submitted under this subsection with respect to air ambulance services in the same manner and to the same extent such provisions apply with respect to a notification submitted under section 1185e(c) of this title with respect to items and services described in such section.

(4) IDR entities**(A) Eligibility**

An IDR entity certified under this subsection is an IDR entity certified under section 1185e(c)(4) of this title.

(B) Selection of certified IDR entity

The provisions of subparagraph (F) of section 1185e(c)(4) of this title shall apply with respect to selecting an IDR entity certified pursuant to subparagraph (A) with respect to the determination of the amount of payment under this subsection of air ambulance services in the same manner as such provisions apply with respect to selecting an IDR entity certified under such section with respect to the determination of the amount of payment under section 1185e(c) of this title of an item or service. An entity selected pursuant to the previous sentence to make a determination described in such sentence shall be referred to in this subsection as the “certified IDR entity” with respect to such determination.

(5) Payment determination**(A) In general**

Not later than 30 days after the date of selection of the certified IDR entity with respect to a determination for qualified IDR ambulance services, the certified IDR entity shall—

(i) taking into account the considerations specified in subparagraph (C), select one of the offers submitted under subparagraph (B) to be the amount of payment for such services determined under this subsection for purposes of subsection (a)(3); and

(ii) notify the provider or facility and the group health plan or health insurance issuer offering group health insurance coverage party to such determination of the offer selected under clause (i).

(B) Submission of offers

Not later than 10 days after the date of selection of the certified IDR entity with respect to a determination for qualified IDR air ambulance services, the provider and the group health plan or health insurance issuer offering group health insurance coverage party to such determination—

(i) shall each submit to the certified IDR entity with respect to such determination—

(I) an offer for a payment amount for such services furnished by such provider; and

(II) such information as requested by the certified IDR entity relating to such offer; and

(ii) may each submit to the certified IDR entity with respect to such determination any information relating to such offer submitted by either party, including information relating to any circumstance described in subparagraph (C)(ii).

(C) Considerations in determination**(i) In general**

In determining which offer is the payment to be applied pursuant to this paragraph, the certified IDR entity, with respect to the determination for a qualified IDR air ambulance service shall consider—

(I) the qualifying payment amounts (as defined in section 1185e(a)(3)(E) of this title) for the applicable year for items and services that are comparable to the qualified IDR air ambulance service and that are furnished in the same geographic region (as defined by the Secretary for purposes of such subsection) as such qualified IDR air ambulance service; and

(II) subject to clause (iii), information on any circumstance described in clause (ii), such information as requested in subparagraph (B)(i)(II), and any additional information provided in subparagraph (B)(ii).

(ii) Additional circumstances

For purposes of clause (i)(II), the circumstances described in this clause are, with respect to air ambulance services included in the notification submitted under paragraph (1)(B) of a nonparticipating provider, group health plan, or health insurance issuer the following:

(I) The quality and outcomes measurements of the provider that furnished such services.

(II) The acuity of the individual receiving such services or the complexity of furnishing such services to such individual.

(III) The training, experience, and quality of the medical personnel that furnished such services.

(IV) Ambulance vehicle type, including the clinical capability level of such vehicle.

(V) Population density of the pick up location (such as urban, suburban, rural, or frontier).

(VI) Demonstrations of good faith efforts (or lack of good faith efforts) made by the nonparticipating provider or nonparticipating facility or the plan or issuer to enter into network agreements and, if applicable, contracted rates between the provider and the plan or issuer, as applicable, during the previous 4 plan years.

(iii) Prohibition on consideration of certain factors

In determining which offer is the payment amount to be applied with respect to qualified IDR air ambulance services furnished by a provider, the certified IDR entity with respect to such determination shall not consider usual and customary charges, the amount that would have been billed by such provider with respect to such services had the provisions of section 300gg-135 of title 42 not applied, or the payment or reimbursement rate for such services furnished by such provider payable by a public payor, including under the Medicare program under title XVIII of the Social Security Act [42 U.S.C. 1395 et seq.], under the Medicaid program under title XIX of such Act [42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq.], under the Children's Health Insurance Program under title XXI of such Act [42 U.S.C. 1397aa et seq.], under the TRICARE program under chapter 55 of title 10, or under chapter 17 of title 38.

(D) Effects of determination

The provisions of section 1185e(c)(5)(E) of this title shall apply with respect to a determination of a certified IDR entity under subparagraph (A), the notification submitted with respect to such determination, the services with respect to such notification, and the parties to such notification in the same manner as such provisions apply with respect to a determination of a certified IDR entity under section 1185e(c)(5)(E) of this title, the notification submitted with respect to such determination, the items and services with respect to such notification, and the parties to such notification.

(E) Costs of independent dispute resolution process

The provisions of section 1185e(c)(5)(F) of this title shall apply to a notification made under this subsection, the parties to such notification, and a determination under subparagraph (A) in the same manner and to the same extent such provisions apply to a noti-

fication under section 1185e(c) of this title, the parties to such notification and a determination made under section 1185e(c)(5)(A) of this title.

(6) Timing of payment

The total plan or coverage payment required pursuant to subsection (a)(3), with respect to qualified IDR air ambulance services for which a determination is made under paragraph (5)(A) or with respect to air ambulance services for which a payment amount is determined under open negotiations under paragraph (1), shall be made directly to the nonparticipating provider not later than 30 days after the date on which such determination is made.

(7) Publication of information relating to the IDR process

(A) In general

For each calendar quarter in 2022 and each calendar quarter in a subsequent year, the Secretary shall publish on the public website of the Department of Labor—

(i) the number of notifications submitted under the IDR process during such calendar quarter;

(ii) the number of such notifications with respect to which a final determination was made under paragraph (5)(A);

(iii) the information described in subparagraph (B) with respect to each notification with respect to which such a determination was so made.¹

(iv) the number of times the payment amount determined (or agreed to) under this subsection exceeds the qualifying payment amount;

(v) the amount of expenditures made by the Secretary during such calendar quarter to carry out the IDR process;

(vi) the total amount of fees paid under paragraph (8) during such calendar quarter; and

(vii) the total amount of compensation paid to certified IDR entities under paragraph (5)(E) during such calendar quarter.

(B) Information with respect to requests

For purposes of subparagraph (A), the information described in this subparagraph is, with respect to a notification under the IDR process of a nonparticipating provider, group health plan, or health insurance issuer offering group health insurance coverage—

(i) a description of each air ambulance service included in such notification;

(ii) the geography in which the services included in such notification were provided;

(iii) the amount of the offer submitted under paragraph (2) by the group health plan or health insurance issuer (as applicable) and by the nonparticipating provider expressed as a percentage of the qualifying payment amount;

(iv) whether the offer selected by the certified IDR entity under paragraph (5) to be the payment applied was the offer sub-

¹ So in original. The period probably should be a semicolon.

mitted by such plan or issuer (as applicable) or by such provider and the amount of such offer so selected expressed as a percentage of the qualifying payment amount;

(v) ambulance vehicle type, including the clinical capability level of such vehicle;

(vi) the identity of the group health plan or health insurance issuer or air ambulance provider with respect to such notification;

(vii) the length of time in making each determination;

(viii) the compensation paid to the certified IDR entity with respect to the settlement or determination; and

(ix) any other information specified by the Secretary.

(C) IDR entity requirements

For 2022 and each subsequent year, an IDR entity, as a condition of certification as an IDR entity, shall submit to the Secretary such information as the Secretary determines necessary for the Secretary to carry out the provisions of this paragraph.

(D) Clarification

The Secretary shall ensure the public reporting under this paragraph does not contain information that would disclose privileged or confidential information of a group health plan or health insurance issuer offering group or individual health insurance coverage or of a provider or facility.

(8) Administrative fee

(A) In general

Each party to a determination under paragraph (5) to which an entity is selected under paragraph (4) in a year shall pay to the Secretary, at such time and in such manner as specified by the Secretary, a fee for participating in the IDR process with respect to such determination in an amount described in subparagraph (B) for such year.

(B) Amount of fee

The amount described in this subparagraph for a year is an amount established by the Secretary in a manner such that the total amount of fees paid under this paragraph for such year is estimated to be equal to the amount of expenditures estimated to be made by the Secretary for such year in carrying out the IDR process.

(9) Waiver authority

The Secretary may modify any deadline or other timing requirement specified under this subsection (other than the establishment date for the IDR process under paragraph (2)(A) and other than under paragraph (6)) in cases of extenuating circumstances, as specified by the Secretary, or to ensure that all claims that occur during a 90-day period applied through paragraph (5)(D), but with respect to which a notification is not permitted by reason of such paragraph to be submitted under paragraph (1)(B) during such period, are eligible for the IDR process.

(c) Definition

For purposes of this section:

(1) Air ambulance services

The term “air ambulance service” means medical transport by helicopter or airplane for patients.

(2) Qualifying payment amount

The term “qualifying payment amount” has the meaning given such term in section 1185e(a)(3) of this title.

(3) Nonparticipating provider

The term “nonparticipating provider” has the meaning given such term in section 1185e(a)(3) of this title.

(Pub. L. 93-406, title I, §717, as added Pub. L. 116-260, div. BB, title I, §105(a)(2)(A), Dec. 27, 2020, 134 Stat. 2838.)

Editorial Notes

REFERENCES IN TEXT

The Social Security Act, referred to in subsec. (b)(5)(C)(iii), is act Aug. 14, 1935, ch. 531, 49 Stat. 620. Titles XVIII, XIX, and XXI of the Act are classified generally to subchapters XVIII (§1395 et seq.), XIX (§1396 et seq.), and XXI (§1397aa et seq.), respectively, of chapter 7 of Title 42, The Public Health and Welfare. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see section 1305 of Title 42 and Tables.

Statutory Notes and Related Subsidiaries

EFFECTIVE DATE

Section applicable with respect to plan years beginning on or after Jan. 1, 2022, see section 105(a)(4) of div. BB of Pub. L. 116-260, set out as a note under section 9817 of Title 26, Internal Revenue Code.

§ 1185g. Continuity of care

(a) Ensuring continuity of care with respect to terminations of certain contractual relationships resulting in changes in provider network status

(1) In general

In the case of an individual with benefits under a group health plan or group health insurance coverage offered by a health insurance issuer and with respect to a health care provider or facility that has a contractual relationship with such plan or such issuer (as applicable) for furnishing items and services under such plan or such coverage, if, while such individual is a continuing care patient (as defined in subsection (b)) with respect to such provider or facility—

(A) such contractual relationship is terminated (as defined in paragraph (b));

(B) benefits provided under such plan or such health insurance coverage with respect to such provider or facility are terminated because of a change in the terms of the participation of the provider or facility in such plan or coverage; or

(C) a contract between such group health plan and a health insurance issuer offering health insurance coverage in connection with such plan is terminated, resulting in a loss of benefits provided under such plan with respect to such provider or facility;