

Acute inpatient hospital services update

As of Jan. 1, 2026, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services revised the acute [inpatient hospital services policy](#) to address the following inpatient readmission review requirements:

- **Extension of the readmission quality review timeframe:** The review period has changed from 72 hours after discharge to 30 days after discharge
- **Readmission exemptions:** Certain readmissions occurring within 30 days of an inpatient index stay for the same or similar diagnosis are excluded from utilization review measures when associated with the following criteria:
 - Cancer hospitals
 - Critical Access Hospitals
 - Planned hospital transfers
 - Inpatient rehabilitation centers
 - Medical treatment of cancer
 - Psychiatric illness
 - Rehabilitation services
 - Planned readmissions
 - Members under 2 years of age
 - Discharge against medical advice (AMA) during the index stay
 - Pregnancy, childbirth and puerperium
 - Organ or tissue transplant (including members under active evaluation, listed for transplant or post transplant)
 - Sickle cell anemia
 - Cystic fibrosis
 - Authorization denial for inpatient, continued stay or post acute care related to the index admission, visit or stay

What you need to do

- Review the [updated policy](#) to ensure compliance with revised readmission review standards and the extended review timeframe
- Continue to follow UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of North Carolina utilization management and authorization requirements for inpatient admissions, continued stays and post-acute care services

Resources

- [North Carolina Medicaid Clinical Coverage Policy for acute inpatient hospital services](#)
- [UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of North Carolina Hospital Services: Observation and Inpatient Policy](#)
- [Reimbursement policy](#)

Questions? We're here to help.

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