

HOME HEALTH ORDERS

SB177 / HB1159



Background

Existing Missouri law requires orders for home health services to be written by a physician; however, many Missourians, particularly those in rural areas, see an advanced practice nurse or physician assistant for their primary care needs. For these patients, orders for home health services have to be written by a physician provider regardless of whether the physician has an existing relationship with the patient or has even met the patient.

This unnecessary administrative requirement:

- Is not necessary to achieve good clinical outcomes;
- Disrupts the continuity of care;
- Can result in denials or delay of available care for seniors;

Thankfully, the CARES Act, which was signed into law by President Trump on March 27, 2020, **permanently changed federal law** so that advanced practice nurses (APNs) and physician assistants (PAs) can now order home health services for their patients. It is a modernization to the Medicare program! Prior to this change, only physicians were able to order home health services.

Why is this bill necessary?

Existing Missouri law tracks previous Medicare regulations. Now that the federal law has changed, it is necessary to update Missouri law.

What does this bill do?

It changes the definition of home health services to include APNs and PAs in the list of providers who may order home health services for their patients.

What this bill doesn't do:

- This bill does not expand the scope of practice for APNs or PAs.
- This bill does not impact existing relationships between physicians and their patients.

How will this bill benefit Missourians?

- Allowing APNs and PAs to write home health orders for their patients without unnecessarily involving a physician who is not otherwise involved in the patient's care will ensure greater accessibility to home health services by:
 - Speeding up the process by which seniors get approved for home health services (which should also ensure quicker access to services); and
 - Speeding up the time it takes for home health providers to be paid for claims submitted;
- Ensures continuity of care as the APN/PA will also be the ordering/certifying practitioner;
- Keeps patients from having to establish a new relationship with a provider they've never seen before in order to meet an administrative requirement;
- Providing health care services to seniors in their homes keeps seniors out of the hospital, which increases hospital capacity--of critical importance during the public health emergency--and also results in cost savings.