



APTA Practice Advisory: CPT Codes for Caregiver Training Without the Patient Present

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The Issue: The [Medicare Physician Fee Schedule final rule for 2024](#) adds three current procedural terminology, or CPT, codes for caregiver training without the patient present. Physical therapists and physical therapist assistants may report these codes under Medicare, and the codes also may be billable under commercial insurance plans. The new codes are available in the Medicine Section of the CPT Manual as of Jan. 1, 2024.

What you need to know: Of the three codes, two reflect services provided on behalf of an individual patient and one reflects services provided on behalf of multiple patients. Specific guidelines govern the use of these codes, and physical therapists and physical therapist assistants must be aware of the requirements for reporting and billing the services related to them.

Suggested next steps: Understand the requirements for reporting, billing, and documenting services to provide caregiver training without the patient present under Medicare. Also review commercial payer plans and policies to determine if these codes will be covered when billed by physical therapists, and, if so, what is required for reporting and documentation.

Who Does This Impact?

Physical therapists and physical therapist assistants in all settings can perform these services. The codes are available to “physicians and other qualified health care professionals,” which the CPT Codebook defines as “an individual who is qualified by education, training, licensure/regulation (when applicable) and facility privileging (when applicable) who performs a professional service within his/her scope of practice and independently reports that professional service.”

Coverage for these codes should be confirmed with each individual payer. Currently, Medicare covers all three codes in all outpatient/Part B settings, including but not limited to private practice, hospital outpatient department, rehabilitation agency, skilled nursing facility, and home health.

What Are the Codes for Caregiver Training Without the Patient Present?

Effective Jan. 1, 2024, three CPT codes are available to physical therapists to report when providing care. These codes were developed collaboratively by APTA, the American Occupational Therapy Association, and the American Speech-Language Hearing Association, and approved by the CPT Editorial Panel to address the

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unique situation in which there is a need to provide caregiver education in the interest of an individual or a group of patients without the patient present.

The three new codes are:

97550 - Caregiver training in strategies and techniques to facilitate the patient's functional performance in the home or community (e.g., activities of daily living [ADLs], instrumental ADLs [IADLs], transfers, mobility, communication, swallowing, feeding, problem solving, safety practices) (without the patient present), face to face; initial 30 minutes.

97551 - Caregiver training in strategies and techniques to facilitate the patient's functional performance in the home or community (e.g., activities of daily living [ADLs], instrumental ADLs [IADLs], transfers, mobility, communication, swallowing, feeding, problem solving, safety practices) (without the patient present), face to face; each additional 15 minutes (List separately in addition to code for primary service 97750).

97552 - Group caregiver training in strategies and techniques to facilitate the patient's functional performance in the home or community (e.g., activities of daily living [ADLs], instrumental ADLs [IADLs], transfers, mobility, communication, swallowing, feeding, problem solving, safety practices) (without the patient present), face to face with multiple sets of caregivers.

Reporting and Documentation Requirements

First, it is important to be clear about the definition of "caregiver." As it relates to the use of these codes, CMS recognizes both of the following definitions: "an adult family member or other individual who has a significant relationship with, and who provides a broad range of assistance to, an individual with a chronic or other health condition, disability, or functional limitation" and "a family member, friend, or neighbor who provides unpaid assistance to a person with a chronic illness or disabling condition."

To report CPT codes 97550, 97551, and 97552, the PT must do so as part of the physical therapist plan of care. Additionally, patient consent for caregiver training services, or CTS, must be specific to the services and documented in the medical record. The treating practitioner is also required to document in the medical record the need for each occurrence of CTS.

The following guidance will assist you in using these codes:

- This procedure is intended to meet a very specialized need for a select group of patients and will generally not be the only means of caregiver training for any patient.
- The standard for provision of caregiver training is to do so with the patient present. Deviation from this standard as evidenced by reporting these new codes should occur only when needed, and documentation must support the reason for this deviation.
- When provided by a physical therapist this service is reported as part of a physical therapist plan of care, indicating when a more intense interaction with the caregiver without the patient in attendance is necessary to ensure adequate skill acquisition by the caregiver.
- When providing training in the interest of a single patient, codes 97550 or 97551 are reported based on time spent training regardless of the number of caregivers present for the training.
- When providing training in a group to multiple sets of caregivers, with each set of caregivers representing a separate patient, code 97552 should be reported per patient represented, not per caregiver present. ([This FAQ from CMS](#) clarifies this and other guidance related to using the codes.)

“Sometimes Therapy”

CMS has designated the caregiver training codes as “sometimes therapy,” which means that, when appropriate, the services can be billed outside a therapy plan of care by a physician and certain other nonphysician providers. As “sometimes therapy” codes, the caregiver training codes are not subject to multiple procedure payment reduction.

APTA Resources

Members can reach out to advocacy@apta.org with questions.

In addition, check out these resources on the [2024 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule](#):

- [News: Final 2024 Physician Fee Schedule Reflects System's Flaws; Includes Some Wins.](#)
- [Web Article: The Big Pictures in the 2024 Fee Schedule.](#)
- [Webinar: APTA Regulatory Update: CMS 2024 Physician Fee Schedule Final Rule.](#)

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