



Effective 5/16/2026

Lines Of Business All Lines of Business

## Air Ambulance Transportation

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*This policy does not govern whether a specific procedure is covered under any specific member plan or policy, nor is it intended to address every claim situation. The determination that any service, procedure, item, etc., is covered under a member's benefit plan shall not be construed as a determination that a provider will be reimbursed for services provided. Individual claims may be affected by other factors, including but not necessarily limited to state and federal laws and regulations, legislative mandates, provider contract terms, and THP's professional judgment. Reimbursement for any services shall be subject to member benefits and eligibility on the date of service, medical necessity, adherence to plan policies and procedures, claims editing logic, provider contractual agreement, and applicable referral, authorization, notification, and utilization management guidelines. Unless otherwise noted within the policy, THP's policies apply to both participating and non-participating providers and facilities. THP reserves the right to review and revise these policies periodically as it deems necessary in its discretion, and it is subject to change or termination at any time by THP. THP has full and final discretionary authority for its interpretation and application. Accordingly, THP may use reasonable discretion in interpreting and applying this policy to health care services provided in any case. No part of this policy may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any shape or form or by any means, whether electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise, without express written permission from THP. When printed, this version becomes uncontrolled. For the most current information, refer to the following website: [healthplan.org](http://healthplan.org).*

### DEFINITIONS, ACRONYMS, TERMS

Term	Definition
Air ambulance	An aircraft used for ambulance operations.
Air ambulance	Transport of a member whose medical condition requires transportation by

transportation	air ambulance as certified by a physician.
Bureau for Medical Services (BMS)	BMS is the designated single state agency responsible for the administration of the State of West Virginia's Medicaid program.
Fixed wing aircraft	Fixed wing (airplane) air ambulance is furnished when the beneficiary's medical condition is such that transport by ground ambulance, in whole or in part, is not appropriate.
Ground Ambulance	A land vehicle designed, equipped, and appropriately staffed to transport members to the nearest medical facility that can provide the needed medical care.
Rotary wing aircraft	Rotary wing (helicopter) air ambulance is furnished when the beneficiary's medical condition is such that transport by ground ambulance, in whole or in part, is not appropriate.
Run sheet (trip sheet)	A form used as a medical record for ambulance services.
Statute mile	A unit of length equal to 1,760 yards or 5,280 feet; exactly 1609.344 meters.

## POLICY

Medically appropriate air ambulance transportation by means of a fixed wing or rotary wing aircraft, is a covered service for all THP lines of business (LOB).

If the transportation is for the purpose of receiving a non-covered service, then the transportation is also non-covered, even if the destination provider is in network with THP.

### Air ambulance transportation codes:

CPT Code	Description
A0430	Ambulance service, conventional air services, transport, one way (fixed wing)
A0431	Ambulance service, conventional air services, transport, one way (rotary wing)
A0435	Fixed wing air mileage, per statute mile
A0436	Rotary wing air mileage, per statute mile

The member's medical condition must require immediate and rapid, air ambulance transportation that could not be provided due to the one of the following:

- The point of pick-up is inaccessible by ground ambulance vehicle (this condition could be met in Hawaii, Alaska, and in other remote or sparsely populated areas of the continental United States)

or

- Great distances or other obstacles i.e. heavy traffic are involved in getting the patient to the nearest hospital with appropriate services as described in this policy

Examples of air ambulance transportation cases: *(Not an all-inclusive list or intended to justify air transportation)*

- Intracranial bleeding, requiring neurosurgical intervention
- Cardiogenic shock

- Burns requiring care in a burn center
- Conditions requiring treatment in a hyperbaric oxygen unit
- Multiple severe injuries
- Severe trauma
- A baby in respiratory distress
- Severe trauma in the mountain high regions or wilderness not accessible by road

Air ambulances must transport the member to the nearest facility that has the appropriate equipment and personnel necessary to diagnose and treat the member unless documented that transport to the nearest facility was inappropriate due to instruction by medical command, weather, or other circumstances to make transfer to another facility more appropriate for member care.

The following services are **not** covered unless there was medical appropriateness in connection with the transport:

*(Not an all-inclusive list)*

- Transport home from a foreign country or another part of the USA where the member may have become ill
- Transport for the sole convenience of the member, their family, or their doctor
- Transport to obtain services of a particular physician, hospital, or skilled nursing facility
- Transportation to any service not covered by the Bureau for Medical Services (BMS)
- MHT and Medicare Only: Transportation to any provider not enrolled with BMS (MHT) or CMS (Medicare)
- Transportation using inadequate or an inappropriate level of staff personnel on board the transporting vehicle
- Transportation provided when the member refuses the appropriate mode of transportation
- Transportation of multiple members in the same air ambulance at the same time, unless an emergency warrants multiple members be transported, as in the case of mass casualty incidents
  - In the event of a mass casualty, mileage must be billed as if only one member was transported

## **Mileage Information and Calculation**

Air ambulance transportation claims must be submitted with the run (trip) sheet.

The air ambulance mileage rate is calculated per actual patient onboard ("loaded") miles flown, expressed in statute miles, and must be reported in whole numbers of loaded statute miles flown.

Air ambulance providers must bill with the appropriate modifier to identify the destination.

Claims for air transportation may account for all mileage from the point of pickup, including where applicable:

- Ramp to taxiway
- Taxiway to runway
- Takeoff run

- Air miles
- Roll out upon landing
- Taxiing after landing

Additional air mileage may be allowed in situations where additional mileage is incurred due to circumstances beyond the pilot's control.

These circumstances include, but are not limited to:

- Military base and other restricted zones, air-defense zones, and similar Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) restrictions and prohibitions
- Hazardous weather
- Variances in departure patterns and clearance routes required by an air traffic controller

## **Multiple Air Ambulance Response For Services**

When multiple air ambulance providers respond to a call for services, the entity that provides the transportation for the member should be the only provider billing the service.

## **Hospital to Hospital Transportation**

Air ambulance transportation is covered for transfer of a member from one hospital to another hospital if the medical appropriateness criteria is met, transportation by ground ambulance would endanger the member's health, and the initial hospital does not have adequate resources to provide the medical services needed. The destination hospital must be the nearest facility with appropriate resources.

## **Pronouncement of Member Death**

A pronouncement of death is effective only when made by an individual authorized under State law to make such pronouncements.

When a member is pronounced dead, THP will reimburse medically necessary air ambulance transportation if the air ambulance is on-scene or actively in air and en route to the scene. In such a circumstance, providers must append the modifier QL- *patient pronounced dead after ambulance called*.

THP will not reimburse air ambulance transportation if the dispatcher received pronouncement of death and had a reasonable opportunity to notify the pilot to abort the flight **or** if the aircraft has merely taxied but not taken off, at a controlled airport, or has been cleared to take off but not actually taken off.

THP will not reimburse mileage or a rural adjustment that would have been allowed had the transport of a living member or member not yet pronounced dead, been completed.

## **MHT Limitations and Special Circumstances:**

THP covers air ambulance transportation subject to the following limitations, conditions, and special circumstances:

*(Not an all-inclusive list)*

- Mileage is paid from the sending facility to the receiving facility.
- When comparable treatment may be obtained at a facility closer than the one transported to,

mileage reimbursed is limited to the distance to the nearest facility.

- Transportation to in-state facilities will be given preference over closer out-of-state facilities.
- Ambulance transportation to or from a helipad, airport, or landing zone is covered when such transportation is provided in conjunction with air ambulance transportation.

## Out of Network Air Ambulance Transportation

1. Commercial, Medicare Advantage, PEIA, and Self-Funded/ASO
  - Reimbursement will be in accordance with payment guidance issued under the No Surprises Act (NSA).
2. Mountain Health Trust (WV Medicaid and CHIP)
  - Reimbursement will be in accordance with the single case agreement (SCA) terms negotiated between THP and the air ambulance provider

## REFERENCES

Palmetto GBA. Local Coverage Determination (LCD): Ambulance Services (L34549). Original effective date October 1, 2015, revision effective July 29, 2021. Accessed June 12, 2023. <https://www.cms.gov/medicare-coverage-database/view/lcd.aspx?lcdid=34549&ver=45&bc=0>

Palmetto GBA. Local Coverage Article (LCA): Billing and Coding Ambulance Services (A56468). Original effective date April 4, 2019, revision effective July 1, 2021. Accessed June 12, 2023. <https://www.cms.gov/medicare-coverage-database/view/article.aspx?articleId=56468&ver=11>

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Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS). Medicare Benefit Policy Manual Chapter 10 – Ambulance Services. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid. Last revised April 13, 2018. Accessed June 12, 2023. <https://www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Guidance/Manuals/Downloads/bp102c10.pdf>