



HAWAII HEALTH SYSTEMS
C O R P O R A T I O N

"Touching Lives Every Day"

COMPLIANCE ALERT 11-28

Medicare Covers Screening and Interventions to Reduce Alcohol Misuse

Beginning October 14, 2011, CMS announced that Medicare “covers annual alcohol screening, and for those that screen positive, up to four, brief, face-to-face behavioral counseling interventions per year for Medicare beneficiaries, including pregnant women:

- who misuse alcohol, but whose levels or patterns of alcohol consumption do not meet criteria for alcohol dependence (defined as at least three of the following: tolerance, withdrawal symptoms, impaired control, preoccupation with acquisition and/or use, persistent desire or unsuccessful efforts to quit, sustains social, occupational, or recreational disability, use continues despite adverse consequences); and,
- who are competent and alert at the time that counseling is provided; and,
- whose counseling is furnished by qualified primary care physicians or other primary care practitioners in a primary care setting.”

Four behavioral counseling interventions are covered and “must be consistent with the following guidelines:

1. **Assess:** Ask about/assess behavioral health risk(s) and factors affecting choice of behavior change goals/methods.
2. **Advise:** Give clear, specific, and personalized behavior change advice, including information about personal health harms and benefits.
3. **Agree:** Collaboratively select appropriate treatment goals and methods based on the patient’s interest in and willingness to change the behavior.
4. **Assist:** Using behavior change techniques (self-help and/or counseling), aid the patient in achieving agreed-upon goals by acquiring the skills, confidence, and social/environmental supports for behavior change, supplemented with adjunctive medical treatments when appropriate.
5. **Arrange:** Schedule follow-up contacts (in person or by telephone) to provide ongoing assistance/support and to adjust the treatment plan as needed, including referral to more intensive or specialized treatment. “

In outpatient hospital settings, as in any other setting, services covered must be provided by a primary care provider.

Source: <http://www.cms.gov/transmittals/downloads/R138NCD.pdf>