



Signature Requirements

Let's first start with the *why*.

- Signatures of the **crew members** providing care attest to the treatment the patient received while in the care of your service. These signatures are a confirmation that the information in the trip report (patient's condition, interventions performed and by whom, the transfer of care, etc), which is part of the patient's medical record, is true and accurate.
- Signatures from **patients** give the provider permission to submit a claim to the patient's insurance company for the services they received from the ambulance provider. We frequently hear from crews that they believe this signature is either for permission to transport or confirmation of HIPAA information being provided to the patient. That is not correct. This signature is an assignment of benefits, meaning that the patient (or beneficiary) is giving permission for the ambulance provider to send a claim to their insurance, and the insurance can then process the claim and either pay it or pass on the financial responsibility for that claim to the patient. If patients are incapable of signing, a signature from a representative may be obtained instead. Without a valid signature, a claim cannot be sent to Medicare and can result in a delay in payment to your service while the billing company attempts to obtain one from the patient after the fact. It is far more efficient to obtain a signature from the patient or their representative at the time of transport. Not to mention, they're motivated to sign when they have the need for the services your ambulance provides!

Now let's talk about the *how* or the requirements of signatures.

- For **crew members**, their signatures can either be obtained on a paper signature form (the most up-to-date forms have a section at the very bottom for signatures and dates for primary caregiver, secondary caregiver, and driver) or electronically in your ePCR software (be sure that the language in the signature box is correct for who is signing such as primary caregiver, other provider, etc). COVID-19 has led to the creation of an additional signature form that can be used in situations where handing a patient your pen and paper or device is not desirable. (A copy of this form can be found at <https://www.pintlerbillingservices.com/client-forms/>.) It has a place for crew members to sign on behalf of a patient who is either confirmed or suspected to have COVID **AND** who have given verbal permission for the provider to sign on their behalf. The crew would either need to check the box confirming this verbal permission from the patient, or document it in the narrative. This signature would be in place of the patient's signature for assignment of benefits. The crew would still need to sign attesting to the patient's care as normal.
- In non-COVID situations, if a **patient** is mentally and physically capable of signing, their signature is required to give permission for the ambulance company to send a claim to Medicare. The patient's signature goes in Section I of the paper signature form (if their signature is illegible or



the patient signs with a mark, a crew member should also sign the witness section of Section I which attests to the mark being the signature of the patient). If the patient is signing electronically in the ePCR software, please be sure that the correct language (ie: signature is from the patient, with lifetime language regarding assignment of benefits) is selected for the box they sign in. If the patient is mentally and physically capable of signing, and refuses to do so or asks someone else to sign on their behalf, the crew should document this information so the billing service can reach out to the patient to attempt to get their signature after the fact.

- If a **patient** is not mentally or physically capable of signing, a representative may sign on their behalf. This representative may be a legal guardian, relative, someone who handles the patient's affairs, or a representative from an agency that provides care or services to the patient (other than the ambulance service). This signature goes in Section II of the paper signature form. The reason the patient was incapable of signing should be documented, as well as the first and last name of the individual signing and their relationship to the patient. If the representative is signing electronically in the ePCR software, be sure to include all that same information, and also make sure that the lifetime language regarding assignment of benefits is included.
- If a **patient** is not capable of signing and there is NO representative available to sign on their behalf, then the crew can obtain a signature from a **representative at the receiving facility** (this is frequently the RN who the crew transfers care of the patient to but can be anyone from the receiving facility). This information goes in Section III of the paper signature form and also requires the reason the patient was incapable of signing, the name of the receiving facility, the time the patient was transported to that facility, the first and last name of the individual signing on behalf of the facility and their credentials. A crew member must also sign Section III at the time of transport attesting to the patient's inability to sign. If your service uses electronic signatures, the above information regarding the facility signer and the reason they're signing on behalf of the patient can either be in the narrative or it can be typed in the signature box where the individual signs.

If you feel your service could use additional help with regards to compliance, please feel free to reach out to Jodi Paine, Certified Compliance Officer, at jodi@pintlerbillingservices.com or 406-297-1627. We offer a documentation training that includes information regarding signatures, and can also provide an annual compliance review and discuss the findings from our most recent audit for your service.