

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Find Out Your Admission Status

Ask the treating physician. If the physician is unclear about the status, speak to someone in the case management department.

Try to Get Your Status Changed

Changing admission status from observation to inpatient is a difficult thing to do. Ask your community doctor to intervene on your behalf. It's your best chance for success.

Prepare for Discharge

If you are not successful changing the admission status, but need follow-up care, you face decisions. See if home health care can be set up for you by the hospital as part of your safe discharge plan, or ask your community physician to order it.

Understand that Medicare Will Not Pay for Nursing Home Care After Hospitalization on Observation Status

You might be able to appeal the denial of coverage for nursing home care if you spent three midnights in the hospital (not in the emergency room). But the appeal can take a year or longer to resolve. Winning is difficult. Filing the appeal does not prevent the nursing home from requiring payment for care pending the outcome of the appeal.

Understand What Skilled Nursing Is

Go to www.medicareadvocacy.org for more information about Medicare coverage of skilled nursing care and how to appeal a denial.

Call HICAP

HICAP (444-3000) is a good place to start when you receive a Medicare Summary Notice that shows Medicare denied payment to the nursing home or that the hospital inappropriately billed your stay to Part B.

Go to www.medicareadvocacy.org

The Center for Medicare Advocacy posts online a complete Self Help Packet for Medicare "Observation Status."

Source: Excerpted from Center for Medicare Advocacy