

## **The Maryland Home Health Waiver for Nurse Practitioners**

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### **Abstract**

A major recommendation of the Institute of Medicine's 2010 *Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health* report, written to improve health and health care for all Americans, is to allow Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) to order and certify home health services.

Home health services are Medicare benefits provided to beneficiaries in their homes, including wound care, physical and occupational therapy, patient and caregiver education, and monitoring serious illness. Last January, Maryland and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services launched the state's Total Cost of Care Model, which set an annual savings for each Medicare beneficiary. However, that came up against the federal law requiring that homebound patients be under the care of a physician to receive home health care services — a rule that increases costs and delays services when a nurse practitioner (NP) is the primary care provider. Thus was born change request number 11330, the Maryland waiver to this federal restriction that went into effect Jan. 1.

Cost savings are not the only reason this waiver makes sense. NPs make most of the nation's house calls.

The Maryland NP Home Health Waiver has the potential to advance clinical practice and advance nurses and nursing practice. Maryland is the first state in the nation to have granted NPs the ability to certify for home health through the waiver. Maryland's NPs and home health agencies will be a model for other states. Maryland's NPs, their patients, hospitals and other referral sources, and home health agencies need to learn about the waiver to ensure a smooth transition.