



## TALKING POINTS

### **HB 1046 APRN HOME HEALTHCARE AUTHORIZATION / SIGNING DEATH CERTIFICATES**

- I. Authorizes APRN/PA to write orders for home healthcare services.
- II. Authorizes APRN/PA to sign death certificates.
- III. **THE AUTHORITY FOR APRNs/PAs TO ORDER/SIGN THE ABOVE MUST BE DELEGATED BY THE SUPERVISING PHYSICIAN IN THE APRN PROTOCOL AGREEMENT/PA SUPERVISORY AGREEMENT. THE PHYSICIAN CONTROLS WHETHER OR NOT TO GRANT THIS AUTHORITY TO THE APRN/PA**

### ➤ **HOME HEALTH CERTIFICATIONS (HHC)**

Background: The CARES act enabled APRNs – country wide - to certify HHC during the emergency order issued during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, once the order expired, APRNs were no longer able to certify HHC unless their state of license adopted this as law. Subsequently, from 3/13/20 - 4/20/23 APRNs were deemed competent and able to certify HHC but on 4/21/23 they were not in Georgia:

- Georgia is 1 of 11 states where Advanced Nurse Practitioners cannot order or sign HHC.
- Patients discharging from the hospital generally have the HHC order initiated by the discharging hospital physician. The patient must be seen in 7 days by their Primary Care Provider (PCP) to have the proper type of HHC service(s) certified. In many cases patients are unable to get an appointment within that time window to see their PCP and are often too weak to leave the house. APRN authorization to sign HHC orders can help to alleviate this issue.
- Much of the rural population of Georgia has limited medical access. Many patients have to see a nurse practitioner or physician's assistant for their primary care.
- Delays in starting HHC increases the risk of the patient being readmitted within 30 days and can cause the hospital to be fined by Medicare.
- The need for home health services has grown exponentially due to an aging population with multiple chronic illnesses to manage.

Types of home health services: Agencies provide skilled care within the patient's home such as:

- Skilled Nursing: Wound care, IV administration, injections, chest tube drainage, tube feeding, management of foley catheters, etc.
- Physical Therapy: Joint mobilization, strengthening exercises, cardiopulmonary, transfer training, range of motion, etc.
- Occupational Therapy: Improving motor skills, balance, coordination, everyday tasks like writing or getting dressed, etc.
- Speech Therapy: Exercises to improve sounds and fluidity of speech, breathing, swallowing, etc.
- Home Health Aide Services: Assist with bathing, getting dressed, meal preparation, home safety, nutrition services, etc.
- Medical Social Worker Services: Assisting patients discharge from hospitals, moving to or from nursing homes, helping patients understand financial and emotional resources available to them, coordinating the complex care of patients needs that require multiple services over time.

## ➤ DEATH CERTIFICATIONS

Background: As of now (February 2024) Georgia is 1 of 12 states that does not or is extremely limiting in allowing Advanced Nurse Practitioners to sign Death Certificates. In 2018, Georgia was 1 of 25. (The 13 states that have since changed are: AL, SC, DC, DE, IN, IL, MO, OK, TX, WY, NV, AK & HI)

### Resulting Impact of Death Certificate Signature Delays

- May cause families to be unable to meet religious burial timing requirements. In some cases, families have to quickly locate a special coroner to sign and incur additional costs of doing so – some reports are as much as \$5,000.
- Can cause families additional extended periods of grief, emotional pain and stress.
- May cause extended delays of family access to insurance benefits, financial accounts and other estate matters related to the deceased.
- May cause funeral homes to have to find alternative storage options due to lack of space.

