



MEDICAL COVERAGE POLICY

SERVICE: Assistant Surgeon Policy

Policy Number: 248

Effective Date: 02/01/2025

Last Review: 01/13/2025

Next Review: 01/13/2026

Important note: Unless otherwise indicated, medical policies will apply to all lines of business. Medical necessity as defined by this policy does not ensure the benefit is covered. This medical policy does not replace existing federal or state rules and regulations for the applicable service or supply. In the absence of a controlling federal or state coverage mandate, benefits are ultimately determined by the terms of the applicable benefit plan documents. See the member plan specific benefit plan document for a complete description of plan benefits, exclusions, limitations, and conditions of coverage. In the event of a discrepancy, the plan document always supersedes the information in this policy.

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PRIOR AUTHORIZATION: Not applicable.

POLICY:

BSWHP uses the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) [National Physician Fee Schedule Relative Value File \(NPFS\)](#) payment policy indicators to determine for which procedures an assistant surgeon may be reimbursed. All CPT codes in the NPFS with the payment code indicator "2" for "Assistant Surgeons" are considered by BSWHP to be reimbursable for assistant surgeon services, as indicated by an assistant surgeon modifier (80, 81, 82, or AS). The CMS definition of Assistant Surgeon Indicator "2" is "2 = Payment restriction for assistants at surgery does not apply to this procedure. Assistant at surgery may be paid."

Procedure codes with a CMS assistant surgeon indicator of "0" are NOT eligible for assistant surgeon reimbursement upon initial adjudication of the claim. However, the claim may be reviewed for reimbursement upon written appeal when documentation has been submitted that supports the medical necessity for the assistant surgeon.

Procedure codes with a CMS assistant surgeon indicator of "1" or "9" are NOT eligible for assistant surgeon reimbursement.

BSWHP will NOT reimburse requests for payment by a non-contracted, health care practitioner who is seeking payment for services as an assistant surgeon using modifier 80, 81, 82, AS, **UNLESS Prior Authorization for that provider has been procured.**

The following provider types are not eligible for reimbursement of assistant at surgery service:

- Certified First Assistant (CFA)
- Certified Surgical First Assistant (CSFA)
- Certified Surgical Assistant (CSA)

These provider types are also not recognized by Medicare as eligible to bill or be reimbursed for assistant at surgery services.



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BACKGROUND:

An Assistant Surgeon actively assists the physician performing a surgical procedure.

Modifier 80	Assistant surgeon
Modifier 81	Minimum assistant surgeon
Modifier 82	Assistant surgeon (when qualified resident surgeon not available)
Modifier AS	Physician assistant, nurse practitioner, or clinical nurse specialist services for assistant at surgery

POLICY HISTORY:

Status	Date	Action
New	06/05/2018	New policy
Reviewed	08/22/2019	No changes
Reviewed	09/24/2020	Re-formatted for SWHP/FirstCare
Reviewed	12/23/2021	No changes
Reviewed	12/29/2022	No changes
Reviewed	03/11/2024	Formatting changes, beginning and ending note sections updated to align with CMS requirements and business entity changes
Reviewed	08/12/2024	No changes
Reviewed	01/13/2025	Ending note section updated to align with business entity changes

REFERENCES:

See [National Physician Fee Schedule](#)

The above reference was utilized in the formulation of this medical policy. BSWHP will continue to review clinical evidence related to this policy and may modify it at a later date based upon the evolution of the published clinical evidence. Should additional scientific studies become available, and they are not included in the list, please forward the reference(s) to BSWHP so the information can be reviewed by the Medical Coverage Policy Committee (MCPC) and the Quality Improvement Committee (QIC) to determine if a modification of the policy is in order.

Note:

Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) products are offered through Scott and White Health Plan dba Baylor Scott & White Health Plan, and Scott & White Care Plans dba Baylor Scott & White Care Plan. Insured PPO and EPO products are offered through Baylor Scott & White Insurance Company. Scott and White Health Plan dba Baylor Scott & White Health Plan serves as a third-party administrator for self-funded employer-sponsored plans. Baylor Scott & White Care Plan and Baylor Scott & White Insurance Company are wholly owned subsidiaries of Scott and White Health Plan. These companies are referred to collectively in this document as Baylor Scott & White Health Plan.

RightCare STAR Medicaid is offered through Scott and White Health Plan in the Central Texas Medicaid Rural Service Area (MRSA); FirstCare STAR is offered through SHA LLC dba FirstCare Health Plans (FirstCare) in the Lubbock and West MRSA; and FirstCare CHIP is offered through FirstCare in the Lubbock Service Area.