

Air Medical Services



Provides access to air medical transport as part of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama health benefit plans.

Air Medical Services, traditionally available only through expensive fee-for-service arrangements or “traveler” policies, are now available through a Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama health plan.

The value for customers is peace of mind that they may return home for care if hospitalized while traveling. The added value for health plans is potential medical cost savings through provider network reimbursement, when a member returns home for care.

The concept is simple. If a covered member is hospitalized more than 150* miles from home, Air Medical Services provides an air ambulance transport to a hospital near home. There are no medical necessity requirements but the transport must be hospital-to-hospital. There are no claims to file or process.

**Distance is calculated as straight-line distance, not road miles.*

Air Medical Services include:

- Customer access to a toll-free medical services hotline, staffed by certified medical professionals experienced in handling emergency situations, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, for requesting air transport services and assistance on how and where to obtain health care;
- Air ambulance transport on an FAA certified and accredited, medically equipped fixed wing aircraft with specially trained air crew and medical teams;
- Ground ambulance transportation from the hospital to the aircraft and from the aircraft to the receiving hospital; and
- Communications with local health care providers and family members to monitor the condition and make transport arrangements.

Air Medical Services may also be arranged through Case Management nurses when a member hospitalized locally needs the services of a specialty hospital more than 150 miles away.

Air Medical Services provided by AirMed International, Inc.

Air Medical Services are available through Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama's contract with AirMed International, Inc. AirMed operated the first civilian jet aircraft in the U.S. equipped exclusively for medical transport. The company owns and operates its aircraft with multiple bases including Birmingham, Alabama and Honolulu, Hawaii. In addition to providing Air Medical Services, AirMed supports many world-renowned medical centers.

AirMed is fully accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Medical Transport Services (CAMTS) and the United States Department of Defense (DoD). All pilots undergo rigorous and continuing training to be certified for long domestic as well as international flights. Since 1983, AirMed crews have transported more than 9,000 patients, flown to every state, over 250 foreign cities and more than 150 countries. In 2004, AirMed transported patients to and from 125 different countries. Several of these patients were Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama members.



Eligibility and Coverage

All individuals and family members covered by the health plan are eligible for Air Medical Services. No additional enrollment or paperwork is necessary. Health plan eligibility records are electronically transferred on a regular basis. Prior to approving and providing services, AirMed International verifies current eligibility records.

When a member qualifies for an air ambulance transport, there are:

- No deductibles or copays
- No out-of-pocket costs to the member

A family member or traveling companion may accompany the patient if there is room on the flight. The patient and accompanying passenger are limited to small carry-on baggage. Expenses such as charges for additional luggage, getting a personal car home, or commercial airline tickets for additional family members to return home are not included.

Limitations

- Air Medical Services area valid for unlimited travel with no limit on extended travel days within the United States.
- If travel outside the United States is for more than 90 consecutive days, Air Medical Services are not available if a member is hospitalized during that trip.
- A covered member may have no more than two air medical transports per year.

Approval for Air Medical Services does not mean that a hospitalization and other medical expenses will be covered. All coverage determinations for medical benefits are subject to the terms, conditions, limitations and exclusions of the health plan.

Exclusions

- Areas of the world that the U.S State Department has issued travel restrictions or declared high risk are subject to exclusion.
- A member with tuberculosis or other chronic airborne pathogens may not be transported.
- Except in extenuating circumstances, a member beyond the second trimester of pregnancy may not be transported.
- A member with simple injuries or mild illness, which can be treated by a local doctor and does not require hospitalization, does not qualify for air medical transport.
- Air Medical Services terminate if coverage by the health plan ends or by 30 days written notice.

Communications and Benefit Materials

Air Medical Services coverage information and wallet cards are mailed by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama to each subscriber's home. Educational materials suggest that members keep an Air Medical Services information card in their wallets with their Blue Cross identification card for easy access to the toll-free Air Medical Services hotline number if needed.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama is not responsible for mistakes, errors or omissions made by AirMed International, its employees or staff members.