



American Association of
NURSE ANESTHESIOLOGY

May 1, 2024

Dr. David Lechner
Vice President, Health Care Delivery & CMO
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Montana
560 N. Park Avenue
Helena, MT 59601

Dear Dr. Lechner,

On behalf of the more than 61,000 members of the American Association of Nurse Anesthesiology (AANA), I write to ask for a meeting with you to discuss Blue Cross Blue Shield of Montana's (BCBS) new anesthesia reimbursement policy, effective June 1, 2024, that removes reimbursement for physical status modifiers. Physical status modifiers have been in use for decades and are used to assess and communicate a patient's pre-anesthesia medical co-morbidities and can be helpful in predicting perioperative risks. This new policy will negatively affect the patients that our Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA) members in Montana serve. AANA is strongly opposed to this change and is requesting that BCBS rescind these policies.

CRNAs personally administer more than 50 million anesthetics to patients each year in the United States. CRNAs are involved in every aspect of anesthesia in all types of settings and additionally provide acute, chronic, and interventional pain management services. In some states, CRNAs are the sole anesthesia providers in nearly 100 percent of rural hospitals affording these medical facilities obstetrical, surgical, trauma stabilization, and pain management capabilities.¹

CRNAs rely on physical status modifiers to help ensure the highest level of safety during patient care. Not considering the complexity of patient care undervalues anesthesia services. In addition, policies such as those introduced by BCBS can cause providers to leave an insurance network, move to a different state, or in extreme cases, leave the healthcare system. This leads to decreased access to anesthesia care for patients and can be especially felt in rural areas with smaller provider pools but where CRNAs predominate. This policy is also extremely short sighted given the anesthesia workforce shortage.

¹ Negrusa op cit, http://journals.lww.com/lww-medicalcare/Abstract/publishahead/Scope_of_Practice_Laws_and_Anesthesia.98905.aspx

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25 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Suite 320, Washington, DC 20001-1408

Phone 202.484.8400

It is vital for BCBS to ensure that your anesthesia reimbursement policies do not create unintended barriers to care for the patients covered by your plan. We request a meeting, as soon as possible, to discuss the troubling upcoming changes to BCBS's anesthesia reimbursement policies.

Please let AANA Senior Associate Director, Federal Regulatory and Payment Policy Randi Gold know if you need further information at 202-484-8400, rgold@aana.com. Thank you for your time and attention to this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dru Riddle". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dru Riddle, PhD, DNP, CRNA, FAAN
AANA President



American Association of
NURSE ANESTHESIOLOGY

May 1, 2024

Dr. Latha Raja Shankar
Chief Medical Officer
Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Mexico
5701 Balloon Fiesta Pkwy NE
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87113

Dear Dr. Shankar,

On behalf of the more than 61,000 members of the American Association of Nurse Anesthesiology (AANA), I write to ask for a meeting with you to discuss Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Mexico's (BCBS) new anesthesia reimbursement policy, effective June 1, 2024, that removes reimbursement for physical status modifiers. Physical status modifiers have been in use for decades and are used to assess and communicate a patient's pre-anesthesia medical co-morbidities and can be helpful in predicting perioperative risks. This new policy will negatively affect the patients that our Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA) members in New Mexico serve. AANA is strongly opposed to this change and is requesting that BCBS rescind these policies.

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AANA President



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May 1, 2024

Dr. Todd Hoffman
Chief Medical Officer
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Oklahoma
1400 S Boston
Tulsa, OK 74119-3613

Dear Dr. Hoffman,

On behalf of the more than 61,000 members of the American Association of Nurse Anesthesiology (AANA), I write to ask for a meeting with you to discuss Blue Cross Blue Shield of Oklahoma's (BCBS) new anesthesia reimbursement policy, effective June 1, 2024, that removes reimbursement for physical status modifiers. Physical status modifiers have been in use for decades and are used to assess and communicate a patient's pre-anesthesia medical co-morbidities and can be helpful in predicting perioperative risks. This new policy will negatively affect the patients that our Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA) members in Oklahoma serve. AANA is strongly opposed to this change and is requesting that BCBS rescind these policies.

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AANA President



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May 1, 2024

Dr. Mark Chassay
Vice President & Chief Medical Officer
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas
1001 E. Lookout Drive
Richardson, TX 75082

Dear Dr. Chassay,

On behalf of the more than 61,000 members of the American Association of Nurse Anesthesiology (AANA), I write to ask for a meeting with you to discuss Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas' (BCBS) new anesthesia reimbursement policy, effective June 1, 2024, that removes reimbursement for physical status modifiers. Physical status modifiers have been in use for decades and are used to assess and communicate a patient's pre-anesthesia medical co-morbidities and can be helpful in predicting perioperative risks. This new policy will negatively affect the patients that our Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA) members in Texas serve. AANA is strongly opposed to this change and is requesting that BCBS rescind these policies.

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May 1, 2024

Dr. Derek J. Robinson
Vice President and Chief Medical Officer
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois
300 E Randolph St.
Chicago, IL 60601

Dear Dr. Robinson,

On behalf of the more than 61,000 members of the American Association of Nurse Anesthesiology (AANA), I write to ask for a meeting with you to discuss Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois (BCBS) new anesthesia reimbursement policy, effective June 1, 2024, that removes reimbursement for physical status modifiers. Physical status modifiers have been in use for decades and are used to assess and communicate a patient's pre-anesthesia medical co-morbidities and can be helpful in predicting perioperative risks. This new policy will negatively affect the patients that our Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA) members in Illinois serve. AANA is strongly opposed to this change and is requesting that BCBS rescind these policies.

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