DATE

Patrick E. Ryce, MD

Senior Vice President and Medical Director

BlueCross BlueShield of Alabama

450 Riverchase Parkway East

Birmingham, Alabama 35244

Dear Dr. Ryce,

I am contacting you on behalf of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM), the premiere membership organization for sleep professionals and centers. The AASM is a membership organization representing over 10,000 sleep medicine practitioners and sleep centers.

Earlier this month, several of our members alerted the AASM to two recently issued BlueCross BlueShield of Alabama draft policies regarding Polysomnography in Non-Respiratory Sleep Disorders (Policy Number 619) and Polysomnography in Respiratory Sleep Disorder testing (Policy Number 305). In both draft policies, BlueCross BlueShield of Alabama requires the Polysomnography to be performed in an accredited sleep center or laboratory and interpreted by a Diplomate of the American Board of Sleep Medicine. While the AASM fully supports the requirement of an accredited provider to review and interpret the polysomnography, we wanted to ensure BlueCross Blue Shield of Alabama was fully aware certificates for Diplomate of the American Board of Sleep Medicine have not been issued since 2007 when the last certification exam was conducted. A certification exam in sleep medicine has been offered by member boards of the American Board of Medical Specialties since 2008.

The AASM understands the accuracy of diagnostic sleep studies depends on the knowledge, skill, and experience of the physician interpreter. Therefore, we ask BlueCross BlueShield of Alabama to consider modifying your draft Policy Guidelines to state “Polysomnography that meets the above criteria must be performed in an accredited sleep center or laboratory and **interpreted by an appropriate physician with training in this area. Acceptable Board Certifications include American Board of Sleep Medicine or the American Board of Medical Specialties with a certification in Sleep Medicine.”** This guideline would be consistent with the policies of many payers around the nation including Medicare.

We encourage BlueCross BlueShield of Alabama to consider all AASM clinical guidelines when developing medical policy in the future. If you have any questions about this issue, please contact AASM Director of Health Policy Jay French at (630) 737-9700 or jfrench@aasmnet.org.

Sincerely,

Ronald Chervin, MD

President