Summary

This policy addresses reimbursement for services provided by an assistant surgeon.

Policy Statement

An assistant surgeon actively assists the primary surgeon performing a surgical procedure.

Codes eligible for reimbursement for an assistant surgeon are designated by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) with minor modifications. Individual consideration may be made when there are extenuating circumstances, supported by documentation establishing medical necessity.

Assistant surgeons submit the identical procedure code(s) as the primary surgeon, with the appropriate modifier (80, 81, 82, or AS) to represent their service(s).

The reimbursement amount is dependent upon the assistant surgeon modifier appended to the surgical code submitted. Only one assistant surgeon will be reimbursed for each eligible procedure.

**MD/DO assistant surgeons:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modifier</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Reimbursement %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>Assistant Surgeon</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>Minimum Assistant Surgeon</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td>Assistant surgeon, when qualified resident</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>surgeon is not available</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Modifier AS is used when a non-physician is performing assistant surgeon services. Eligible non-physician providers include:

- Physician assistants
- Nurse practitioners
- Clinical nurse specialists

**Note:** Medica also allows reimbursement to Registered Nurse First Assistants (RNFA). Surgical procedures eligible for assistant surgeon performed by RNFAs must be billed using the primary surgeon’s provider number, including the same surgical code as the primary surgeon, appended with the AS modifier.

**Non-physician assistant surgeons:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modifier</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Reimbursement %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AS</td>
<td>Physician assistant, nurse practitioner, or</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>clinical nurse specialist for assistant at</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>surgery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Definitions  
**Assistant Surgeon** – A practitioner who actively assists the primary surgeon in the performance of a surgical procedure.

Code Lists  
[Assistant Surgeon Eligible Code List 2016](#)

Resources  
- Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)
- Healthcare Common Procedure Coding System (HCPCS)
- National Physician Fee Schedule (NPFS)

Effective Date  
04/01/1999

Revision Updates  
- 01/01/2016  Annual code update
- 09/03/2015  Annual policy review
- 01/01/2015  Annual code update
- 07/24/2014  Annual policy review
- 01/01/2014  Annual code update