

How Blood Centers Can Support the TRICARE Demonstration Project Health

Background

Beginning on January 1, 2027, the Defense Health Agency will launch a 5-year pilot program ([TRICARE PHBT Demonstration](#)) that provides a separate add-on payment for the cost of blood products and the professional services involved in administering them when medically necessary pre-hospital blood transfusion (PHBT) is provided to eligible TRICARE beneficiaries during ALS2, Specialty Care Transport, or air ambulance transport.

It is the aim of the pilot program to collect data on cost of coverage, patient outcomes, and logistical feasibility so that the Defense Health Agency can determine whether to make the program a permanent part of the TRICARE ambulance payment methodology. This pilot program is the result of consistent advocacy by America's Blood Centers and its partners in the prehospital blood space.

Below you will find helpful talking points and concrete ways that ABC blood centers can help EMS partners make sure that TRICARE can collect the necessary data during this pilot program.

Talking Points

- The current ambulance bundle does not adequately reimburse the cost of prehospital blood. This pilot program will provide payment for blood products separately from the current ALS2 bundled payment rate.
- Currently only 2% of EMS agencies nationwide carry blood products for prehospital transfusions as it is often cost-prohibitive.
- The risk of negative health outcomes increases the longer a needed transfusion is delayed.

What Blood Centers Should Do

- **Provide EMS partners with accurate, itemized invoices for every blood product used.** This is the single most important step. Under the demonstration, EMS is reimbursed at the higher of the OPPS blood product rate (currently around \$189.84/unit under HCPCS P9010) or the actual cost shown on the blood center's invoice. Without an invoice, EMS will receive the OPPS floor, which may not accurately cover the cost of the blood product.
- **Make EMS partners aware of the demonstration that begins on January 1, 2027.** Since this demonstration was announced recently, many EMS agencies may not know that the add-on payment exists or how to bill for it. A brief outreach from their blood center can accelerate uptake.
- **Encourage thorough record-keeping.** DHA will evaluate the demonstration primarily on retrospective claims data. ABC members should encourage record keeping as complete, consistent documentation from EMS partners directly strengthens the evidence base for making the payment permanent.
- **Flag the demonstration to your Members of Congress.** ABC members need to ask elected Members of Congress for their support for this pilot program, especially if they sit on the Senate or House Armed Services Committee. Permanent adoption for TRICARE For Life beneficiaries will eventually require statutory relief, so sustained congressional attention matters.
 - This program is ideal to bring up during a site visit as a valuable tool to expand prehospital blood transfusions.