

South Dakota Ambulance Reimbursement

2026 SD Medicaid vs. Medicare: Close in Most Areas — Except Super-Rural

Key point: South Dakota's July 1, 2026 Medicaid ground-ambulance base rates are now quite close to ordinary Medicare urban and rural rates. The significant remaining gap is for **Medicare super-rural transports**, where Medicare pays an additional 22.6% on the rural ground-ambulance base rate. Medicare also enhances payment for the first 17 loaded miles of rural transports.

Code	Service	SD Medicaid	Medicare Urban	Medicare Rural	Medicare Super-Rural
A0428	BLS non-emergency	\$280.09	\$290.25	\$293.10	\$359.34
A0429	BLS emergency	\$448.15	\$464.40	\$468.95	\$574.93
A0426	ALS1 non-emergency	\$336.11	\$348.30	\$351.72	\$431.21
A0427	ALS1 emergency	\$532.18	\$551.48	\$556.88	\$682.74
A0433	ALS Level 2	\$770.25	\$798.19	\$806.02	\$988.18
A0434	Specialty Care Transport	\$910.30	\$943.32	\$952.56	\$1,167.84

Across these base codes: SD Medicaid is about **3.5% below Medicare urban** and **4.4% below Medicare rural**, but about **22% below Medicare super-rural**.

Mileage shows the same rural issue: SD Medicaid pays **\$9.00 per loaded mile**. Medicare rural pays approximately **\$9.42 per mile**, with the first 17 rural miles enhanced to approximately **\$14.13 per mile**.

What “Super-Rural” Means

CMS defines super-rural areas as the lowest 25% of rural ZIP-code areas nationally when ranked by population density. Eligibility is determined by the **ZIP code where the patient is picked up**, not simply where the ambulance service is headquartered. The current 22.6% super-rural base-rate bonus is extended through December 31, 2027.

South Dakota Examples

Super-rural status is ZIP-code specific and CMS updates the geographic designation file. In South Dakota, the types of communities that commonly fall within the state's very low-density frontier service areas include places such as **Philip, Kadoka, Faith, Buffalo, and Lemmon**. **For reimbursement decisions, the individual pickup ZIP code should always be checked against the current CMS file.**

Why It Matters: 25-Mile ALS Emergency Example

Payment	Base	25-Mile Mileage	Total
SD Medicaid	\$532.18	\$225.00	\$757.18
Medicare Urban	\$551.48	\$233.25	\$784.73
Medicare Rural	\$556.88	\$315.57	\$872.45
Medicare Super-Rural	\$682.74	\$315.57	\$998.31

Bottom line: For a typical 25-mile ALS emergency transport, SD Medicaid is only **\$27.55 below Medicare urban**, but **\$115.27 below Medicare rural** and **\$241.13 below Medicare super-rural**. The reimbursement challenge is therefore increasingly concentrated in the rural/frontier areas where maintaining 24/7 ambulance readiness is often most difficult.

Sources: South Dakota Medicaid Transportation Services Fee Schedule, effective July 1, 2026; CMS 2026 Ambulance Fee Schedule Public Use Files and CMS ZIP Code Geographic Designations. Medicare amounts are illustrative and can vary by pickup ZIP code. Community examples should be verified against the current CMS ZIP-code designation before use in a claim-specific analysis.