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MEDICARE UPDATE

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on identifying correct and incorrect forms, visit www.cms.hhs.gov/ElectronicBillingEDITrans/Downloads/1500%20problems.pdf or contact Brian Reitz at Brian.Reitz@cms.hhs.gov.

The CMS website, http://www.cms.hhs.gov/ElectronicBillingEDITrans/16_1500.asp, provides the following description of the Form 1500 and its intended use:

The National Uniform Claim Committee (NUCC) is responsible for the maintenance of the CMS-1500 form. CMS does not provide the form to providers for claim submission. In order to purchase claim forms, you should contact the U.S. Government Printing Office at (202) 512-1800, local printing companies in your area, and/or office supply stores. Each of these sources sells the CMS-1500 claim form in its various configurations (single part, multi-part, continuous feed, laser, etc).

"The only acceptable claim forms are those printed in Flint OCR Red, J6983, (or exact match) ink. Although a copy of the CMS-1500 form can be downloaded, copies of the form cannot be used for submission of claims, since your copy may not accurately replicate the scale and OCR color of the form. The majority of paper claims sent to Medicare contractors are scanned using Optical Character Recognition (OCR) technology. This scanning technology allows for the data contents contained on the form to be read while the actual form fields, headings, and lines remain invisible to the scanner. Photocopies cannot be scanned and therefore are not accepted by Medicare contractors."

Registration deadline for National Provider Identifier still May 23, 2007

CMS continues to urge immediate provider action on the National Provider Identifier (NPI), the standard unique

health identifier health care providers will soon need to use in filing and processing health care claims and other transactions. The standard unique health identifier was mandated by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA). HHS published the first announcement of the availability of the registration process in May, 2005. Despite pressures for a postponement of the deadline from a number of health care organizations, the deadline by which all providers and covered entities must be registered is still set for May 23, 2007.

ICA recommends all health care providers complete registration for National Provider Identification (NPI) before the May 23rd deadline. NPI to replace all "legacy" identifiers.

According to the official US government release, "The purpose of these provisions is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the electronic transmission of health information. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has developed the National Plan and Provider Enumeration System (NPPES) to assign these unique identifiers." The federal agency also has stated that, "Use of the NPI will reduce costs and improve efficiency in the nation's health care system by eliminating the need for health care providers to maintain, keep track of, and use multiple identification numbers assigned by the various health plans they bill."

The NPI is a new number issued through the National Provider System and will replace all "legacy" identifiers that are currently being used. HHS describes the ten-digit NPI number appli-

cants receive as being "intelligence free" meaning that no information about the holder of any assigned number is contained in that number, the digits being completely random.

All covered health care providers must obtain NPIs. Health care providers are covered entities if they transmit any data in electronic form in connection with a transaction for which the Secretary of Health and Human Services has adopted a standard. Covered entities must use NPIs in standard transactions no later than the compliance dates. The compliance date for providers is May 23, 2007.

A health care provider will be assigned only one NPI, and that NPI will not change over time. Adoption of the standard health care provider identifier enables a provider to use only one identifier — its NPI — to identify themselves in all standard transactions.

There are two primary ways to obtain an NPI:

1. Complete the on-line application at the NPPES website— <https://NPPES.cms.hhs.gov/NPPES/Welcome.do>.
2. Download the paper application form at www.cms.hhs.gov/NationalProviderStand/ and mail it to the address on the form.

For instructions on applying on-line and the link to submit an electronic application you can also go to:

<https://nppes.cms.hhs.gov/NPPES/StaticForward.do?forward=static.instructions>

Before you begin, make sure you have the following information required for individual providers:

- Provider Name
- SSN (or ITIN if not eligible for SSN)
- Provider Date of Birth
- Country of Birth
- State of Birth (if Country of Birth is U.S.)
- Provider Gender
- Mailing Address
- Practice Location Address and Phone Number
- Taxonomy (Provider Type)
- State License Information
- Contact Person Name
- Contact Person Phone Number and Email

This information will be required to complete the NPI Application Form. You will not be able to save your work if you quit before you have completed the application form, and a number of doctors who have attempted to apply online, and who had not collected the required information outlined above in advance, found that their application process was "timed out" because of the length of time needed to research and obtain the required data.

ICA recommends that you have all the required information collected ahead of time. You may even want to download and fill in a paper application prior to submitting that data on-line to avoid any complications. ICA also recommends that all DCs act now and complete the registration process well ahead of the deadline.

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