

The Medicare News You Can Use This Week: eRx Exemptions for 2012 and 2013, Billing Education, and eSignatures



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You Can Now Sign Your Medicare Enrollment Application Electronically

Internet-based PECOS (Provider Enrollment, Chain, and Ownership System) now allows providers to sign Medicare enrollment applications electronically. Save time and expedite review of your application by using internet-based PECOS. *This feature does not change who is required to sign the application.*

Any *Organizational Provider applications* that are submitted via internet-based PECOS will require the user completing the application to provide an email address for the authorized signer of the application as part of the submission process. The authorized signer can then follow the instructions in the email and electronically sign the application. This applies to applications using the following forms:

- 855-A for Institutional Providers
- 855-B for Clinics, Group Practices, and Certain Other Suppliers, and
- 855-S for Durable Medical Equipment, Prosthetics, Orthotics, and Supplies (DMEPOS) Suppliers

In internet-based PECOS, all *Individual Provider applications* submitted by the individual provider that do not include new

reassignments may be e-signed as part of the submission process. This applies to applications using the following forms:

- 855-I for Physicians and Non-Physician Practitioners, and
- 855-0 for Eligible Ordering and Referring Physicians and Non-physician Practitioners

Any Individual Provider application (855-I) containing new reassignments (855-R) can be electronically signed as part of the submission process; however, you must select the Authorized Official / Delegated Official (A0/D0) for the Organization that is accepting the reassignment and enter that official's email address. The official then will be required to follow the instruction in the email and electronically sign the application.

If an individual provider or A0/D0 does not want to make use of the e-signature process, they can simply follow the current process of printing and signing the certification statement (which then needs to be mailed to the appropriate contractor).

Questions concerning a system issue regarding PECOS should be referred to the CMS EUS Help Desk at 866-484-8049 or EUSSupport@cgi.com.

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New CME Module on CMS Healthcare Delivery Reform Available on Medscape

On Thu Mar 22, a new CME module was posted on Medscape. This module provides information and continuing medical education (CME) about CMS's healthcare delivery system reform efforts and can be accessed on Medscape (with a free registration) at <http://www.Medscape.org/viewarticle/760133>.

This is actually a nice synopsis of all the different efforts underway and a good read for anyone!

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Authorization to Disclose Information to the Social Security Administration

On Thu Mar 22, Commissioner Astrue signed an Open Letter to Healthcare Providers, Health Information Managers, and Medical Records Administrators about Social Security's new electronic signature process for Form SSA-827, "Authorization to Disclose Information to the Social Security Administration." This means many future records requests coming from Social Security will not be accompanied by the traditional patient signature (sometimes referred to as "wet-signed") – they will be electronically signed, although the form itself will look the same.

To see this important message, visit <http://go.usa.gov/EUu>. To learn about Social Security's new electronic signature process, visit <http://go.usa.gov/P7V>.

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ICD-10: It's Closer Than It Seems – Have You Completed Your 5010 Implementation?

Recently, CMS announced it will not initiate enforcement action against any *HIPAA*-covered entity for an additional three months, through Sat June 30, for the updated *HIPAA* transaction standards (ASC X12 Version 5010, NCPDP Versions D.0 and 3.0). Although much progress has been made in the successful receipt and processing of claims in the Version

5010 format, CMS is aware that there are still challenges and issues impeding an industry-wide upgrade.

During these additional 90 days during which CMS will not initiate enforcement penalties, you should collaborate more closely with trading partners on appropriate strategies to resolve any remaining problems. Two steps providers can take to ensure a smooth upgrade include:

- Establish a line of credit: To avoid potential cash flow disruptions, providers should consider establishing or increasing a line of credit. By doing so, they can prepare for possible delays and denials in payer claims reimbursements if noncompliant Version 5010 transactions are submitted.
- Check partner readiness: Because a provider's Version 5010 upgrade can be dependent upon his or her vendor, it is important for providers to be aware of their vendor's transition status. If your vendor is behind schedule for Version 5010 adoption, get confirmation of their timeline to be compliant, and encourage them to take action so that your system will be prepared to handle your claims.

Other steps to prepare for the Version 5010 upgrade can be found in the "Version 5010: Ensuring a Smooth Transition" factsheet, which provides an overview of several actions providers can take to maintain continuity of operations for their practices as they prepare to complete Version 5010 testing.

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2012 eRx Payment Adjustment Update

CMS continues to receive inquiries about the Medicare Electronic Prescribing (eRx) Incentive Program and the 2012

eRx payment adjustment. This message seeks to clarify the issues CMS has heard from physicians and other healthcare professionals.

Statutory Authority/Background

CMS is required to adjust the payments of eligible professionals who are not successful electronic prescribers beginning in 2012. This requirement is outlined in Section 132 of the *Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008 (MIPPA)*.

CMS listed the requirements for being a successful e-prescriber for purposes of avoiding the 2012 payment adjustment in the 2011 Physician Fee Schedule final rule. In February 2012, all eligible professionals who did not meet these requirements were sent a letter notifying them of this fact.

Significant Hardship Exemption Requests

In response to stakeholder feedback, CMS also published a standalone eRx rule on Tue Sep 6, 2011, to provide additional circumstances under which eligible professionals would qualify for hardship exemptions. Eligible professionals initially had until Tue Nov 1, 2011, to submit a request for a hardship exemption for the 2012 eRx payment adjustment via the newly-created Quality Reporting Communication Support Page; this deadline was later extended to Tue Nov 8, 2011. CMS finished its review of these requests in February 2012 and continues to notify requestors via email whether their request was approved or denied.

Questions and Concerns

Although there is no appeal or review process established for the eRx Incentive Program and payment adjustment, CMS encourages eligible professionals with questions or concerns about the eRx payment adjustment and hardship exemption

requests to contact the QualityNet Help Desk. Through the QualityNet Help Desk, CMS is working with eligible professionals and CMS-selected group practices that have questions about eRx payment adjustments and/or hardship exemption decisions. CMS is handling all hardship exemption requests and any questions or concerns on a case-by-case basis. Contact the QualityNet Help Desk if you have issues relating to the eRx payment adjustment and/or the rationale for denial of your hardship exemption request.

The QualityNet Help Desk can be reached Mon – Fri, 7am-7pm CMT, at 866-288-8912 or QNetSupport@sdps.org.

2013 & 2014 eRx Payment Adjustment

Please note that payment adjustments under the eRx Incentive Program run until 2014. For information on how to avoid the 2013 and 2014 eRx payment adjustments, please visit the Electronic Prescribing Incentive Program webpage and review MLN Matters Article #SE1206.

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Medicare ePrescribing Penalty: Phone Lines Now Open (Courtesy of the AMA)

CMS has confirmed that the QualityNet Help Desk is now prepared to take calls from physicians on the Medicare ePrescribing penalty. We understand that physicians have already attempted in the past few weeks to contact the Help Desk to discuss their individual situation which resulted in a 2012 penalty, but in many cases were turned away. CMS has been working diligently with the Help Desk to ensure that a physician's case is adequately reviewed. CMS wants physicians to know that the issues they are having are being examined.

As CMS has indicated late last week, although there is no formal appeals or review process for the ePrescribing penalty, they encourage physicians with questions or concerns about their penalty and/or hardship exemption request to contact CMS' QualityNet Help Desk as soon as possible. CMS is handling all penalty and/or hardship exemption requests and any questions or concerns on a case-by-case basis.

Physicians should continue to contact the QualityNet Help Desk if they have issues relating to the ePrescribing penalty. If a physician has previously contacted the QualityNet Help Desk and their case has been resolved to their satisfaction, the physician does not need to contact the QualityNet Help Desk again.

The QualityNet Help Desk can be reached M-F; 7:00 am – 7:00 pm CMT at 866-288-8912 or via email at qnetsupport@sdps.org.

NOTE: If a physician continues to experience problems with the Help Desk, CMS is encouraging physicians to email their concerns directly to Medicare at eRx_hardship@cms.hhs.gov.

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Hardship Exemptions for 2013 Electronic Prescribing Payment Adjustment

On Thursday, March 1, CMS reopened the Quality Reporting Communication Support Page to allow individual eligible professionals and *CMS-selected* group practices the opportunity to request a significant hardship exemption for the 2013 Electronic Prescribing (eRx) payment adjustment. The Communication Support Page will accept hardship exemption requests now *through Sat June 30, 2012*.

The Quality Support Page User Manual is available to assist

individual eligible professionals and CMS-selected group practices in submitting their request for a hardship exemption and can also be accessed from the “Help” icon on the Communication Support Page.

For additional information on the 2013 eRx payment adjustment, including who is subject to the payment adjustment and how to avoid the payment adjustment, visit the eRx Incentive Program website at www.CMS.gov/eRxIncentive. Specifically, eligible professionals should review MLN Matters Article SE1206: “2012 eRx Incentive Program: Future Payment Adjustments.”

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New MLN Matters Article (MM7727) – Medicare Quality Reporting Incentive Programs Manual Update

The new chapter describes the yearly payment instructions used by the Medicare contractors when making incentive payments described in the “Medicare Quality Reporting Incentives Manual.”

<http://www.cms.gov/MLNMattersArticles/Downloads/MM7727.pdf>

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Revised MLN Matters Article (MM7745) – April Update to the Calendar Year (CY) 2012 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule

Database (MPFSDB)

- HCPCS Codes with Revised Medicare Physician Fee Schedule Payment Indicators
- New HCPCS Codes to be added with the Effective Date of April 1, 2012
- New HCPCS Codes to be added with the Effective Date of January 1, 2012
- New HCPCS Codes to be added with the Effective Date of July 1, 2011
- HCPCS codes to be discontinued effective April 1, 2012

<http://www.cms.gov/MLN MattersArticles/Downloads/MM7745.pdf>

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Revised MLN Matters Article (MM7633) – Screening and Behavioral Counseling Interventions in Primary Care to Reduce Alcohol Misuse

Two new G codes, G0442 (Annual Alcohol Misuse Screening, 15 minutes), and G0443 (Brief face-to-face behavioral counseling for Alcohol Misuse, 15 minutes), are effective October 14, 2011, and will appear in the January quarterly update of the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule Database (MPFSDB) and Integrated Outpatient Code Editor (IOCE). For claims with Dates of Service on or after October 14, 2011, through December 31, 2011, your Medicare contractor will use their pricing to pay for G0442 and/or G0443. Deductible and coinsurance do not apply. Contractors will hold institutional claims received prior to April 2, 2102, with TOBs 13X, 71X, 77X, and 85X and release those claims beginning April 2, 2012.

<http://www.cms.gov/MLN MattersArticles/Downloads/MM7633.pdf>

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Medicare Billing Certificate Programs for Part A and Part B Providers

From the MLN: Now Available – Medicare Billing Certificate Programs for Part A and Part B Providers– Learn about the Medicare Program, and the specifics for your provider type with a special focus on Medicare billing, and receive a certificate in Medicare billing from CMS for successful completion of the Program. Successful completion consists of completion of all required web-based training courses, required readings, and a 75-percent or higher score on the post-assessment.

To participate in either the Part A or Part B provider type program, visit <http://www.CMS.gov/MLNproducts> and click on 'Web-Based Training Modules' under 'Related Links Inside CMS.'

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