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National Provider Identifier compliance date approaching quickly

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On May 25, 2006, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued a press release reminding covered health care professionals that the deadline for obtaining National Provider Identifiers (NPI) is quickly approaching. In the press release, CMS strongly urged covered health care professionals to take action now to have their NPIs well in advance of the deadline. HIPAA-covered health care professionals, health plans, and health clearinghouses must use the NPI in standard transactions—specified by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA)—beginning May 23, 2007. Small health plans have until May 23, 2008 to comply.

The NPI, instituted as part of HIPAA and administered by CMS, is a 10-digit numeric identifier that does not expire or change. The identifier helps ensure that medical claims are processed on time and payments are made correctly. The NPI will replace all payer-specific identification numbers (e.g., Medicaid provider numbers) on nationally recognized electronic transactions (also known as standard transactions). These transactions include claims, eligibility inquiries and responses, claim status inquiries and responses,

referrals, and remittance advices. The Medicare fee-for-service program began accepting the NPI from health care professionals in standard transactions in January 2006.

Individual providers (physicians, dentists, and pharmacists) and organizations (hospitals, nurs-

NPI. Getting a head start on submitting claims to payers who adopt the NPI early will help resolve any system problems before the NPI number is mandatory.

The NPI is not required for paper transactions (e.g., paper claims, paper prior authorization requests, and

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ing homes, pharmacies, and group practices) who transmit health information electronically in connection with any of the standard transactions are required to obtain NPIs, even if they use business associates such as billing agencies to prepare the transactions.

Once a covered health care professional has an NPI, it must share the NPI with any entity that needs it. After the NPI is fully implemented, physicians will no longer need different identifying numbers when filing claims with various health plans. Physicians' NPIs do not change when they change practices or work in different settings.

Physicians also should make sure that their practice management systems are able to incorporate the NPI number. It is important to find out when their clearinghouse for electronic claims and private insurance payers will begin accepting the

other paper forms). However, specific health plans, such as Wisconsin Medicaid, may require the use of NPI on paper transactions. Future Medicaid publications will notify providers when procedures for paper transactions are determined.

Health care professionals may obtain their NPI in 1 of the following 3 ways:

1. Apply on-line at <https://NPPES.cms.hhs.gov>.
2. Call the NPI Enumerator (800.465.3203) and request a paper NPI application form. Complete it and mail it back to the address on the form.
3. Apply for a bulk enumeration, which allows an Electronic File Interchange Organization approved by CMS to obtain a group of providers' NPI.

For more details about NPI, visit www.cms.hhs.gov/NationalProvIdentStand/.

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