

Dear PMC Members:

On Tuesday, February 28, 2006, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) hosted their monthly Open Door Forum (ODF) for Home Health (HH), Hospice, and Durable Medical Equipment (DME). CMS' Natalie Johnson moderated the forum.

Updates:

Interim Final Rule

In their "Fact Sheet" on the IFR aimed primarily at physicians, CMS indicated that they plan to issue supplier guidance sometime in the near future. The PMC asked at the ODF when this guidance was expected and CMS had no answer. The PMC also pressed CMS on whether they plan to retract the IFR and reintroduce it as a proposed rule, subject to proper notice and comment, as suggested by Congress in the legislation. Again, CMS had no answer. The PMC intends to follow-up with ODF Natalie Johnson via e-mail and hopefully an answer will be forth coming. As soon as any information on a timetable for guidance is provided, the PMC will forward it on the PMC members.

Competitive Bidding

CMS stated that the proposed rule for competitive bidding is still "in clearance" and there is no word on when the rule will be released. At past ODFs, CMS has stated that the competitive bidding rule should be finalized by Spring and that the Program Advisory and Oversight Committee (PAOC) will be held soon after the rule's release. At the PAOC meeting, CMS plans to provide greater detail on the rule, hear feedback from PAOC members, and take comments from the public.

DME MACs

CMS is moving ahead with the transition away from DMERCs to the new DME Medicare Administrative Contractors (DME MACs). While all four contracts have been awarded, a protest and subsequent litigation has been brought against the contracts awarded in the new Regions C and D. Despite this, all four DME MACs are in the process of getting started and Regions A and B have already started outreach to their suppliers including information as to how claims are to be submitted, what changes are made from the old DMERC claims process, and other important information.

CMS has also held an ODF on the DME MAC transition and is planning an additional forum in March. Suppliers interested in participating in this forum (which will be held by conference call only) should contact CMS' Sue Lathroum at sue.lathroum@cms.hhs.gov.

The next ODF for Home Health, Hospice and DME is scheduled for April 12th. Please note that CMS has switched the timing of all ODFs. Instead of ODFs being held monthly, CMS will now hold the forum every six weeks.

Happy Mardi Gras - *Le Bon Temps Roule!!*