

## Medicare loves you

Maybe your landlord didn't fix the furnace yet. Maybe your business is located in an old drafty building. Perhaps it is your personal effort to curb the CO2 emissions. For some reason it's cold and you need ways of keeping warm. Look no further, Centers for Medicare Services (CMS) in its loving, caring and kindly way wants to make sure you are warm this winter. As part of their "goodwill program" they have decided to provide you with all the "HEAT" that you need. Health Care Fraud Prevention and Action Team otherwise known as "HEAT" will be traversing the country looking for providers who need relief from the cold, so be looking for their support van stopping at your location soon.

Maybe that is making it sound too nice, almost like they love you. In reality in 2000, CMS established the CERT (Comprehensive Error Rate Testing) Program to monitor and report the accuracy of Medicare payments. The initial goal was to review the Medicare contractors (versus the providers) to insure they were reviewing and paying claims correctly, however, that same process also allowed the contractors to return to providers and request repayment when errors were discovered.

CERT did such a good job, it gave birth to RACs (Recovery Audit Contractors) whose functions include lowering claim error rates while insuring taxpayers and future Medicare beneficiaries are protected as funds are recovered. They are "incented" to find errors and are independent medical collection agencies and are paid on a contingency basis ranging from 9-12.5%. So as we approach another winter and the need to bundle up, the government continues to turn up its own thermostat. Last year the Departments of Justice and Health and Human Services launched the Health Care Fraud Prevention and Action Team, or "HEAT" as it is known.

Through HEAT there is an unprecedented collaboration between agencies and law enforcement partners. The fight against criminal and civil health care fraud is a priority at the Cabinet level and President Obama's FY2011 budget request includes an additional \$60 million to expand the network of strike forces to additional cities. In just the last fiscal year they have won or negotiated \$1.6 billion in judgments or settlements and returned more than \$2.5 billion to the Medicare Trust Fund. Additionally, other payers such as State Medicaid and other large payers are following Medicare's lead.

So what does this have to do with you? EVERYTHING. While we've been hearing a lot about the "F" word lately (fraud), we may overlook and not pay as much attention to our own omissions, which lack the 'intent' of fraud. The result, unfortunately, is still the same...the (refund) check is in the mail. Providers large and small are being targeted. No providers are being overlooked.

Follow these simple rules:

- Do you have a signed and dated delivery ticket for the item you dispensed?
- Do you have supporting medical documentation and a signed written order from the physician for the item you provided?
- Did you bill Medicare (assigned or complimentary) for every covered item for Medicare beneficiaries?

- Get prepared and stay prepared...audit yourself or hire somebody to do it for you.

Essentially Women providers it time to turn up your own “heat”. Let’s keep our windows air tight, seal your doors, close off unused rooms, put up curtains to block out the draft. When the Medicare “HEAT” van pulls up to give you their LOVE you can send them on and say “no thanks” I am already warm enough. Medicare LOVE is something I believe we can all do without.

Be well talk soon,

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