



Sent: Tuesday, February 27, 2007

From: Joyce Cunningham, MSW, BCD
President, Center for Clinical Social Work/ABE

To: Board Certified Diplomates in Clinical Social Work

Subject: **Help from the Center**

Here are two items that should be helpful to you in your practice: one is intended to require managed care organizations to recognize you as a board-certified clinical social worker; the other is a reminder about filing for a National Provider Identifier.

Put Your BCD To Work!

Those who provide services to managed care organizations (MCOs) might wish to make the effort to be recognized for board-certified status. Per the regulations of the NCQA (National Committee on Quality Assurance), "If a practitioner states that he or she is board certified, the MCO must verify board certification." The MCO may never have asked you about your board-certification status, but they always ask MDs-and we at ABE feel that you are entitled to recognition as a Board Certified Diplomate in Clinical Social Work!

Next time you receive an MCO re-credentialing packet, go to the "board certification" section and fill in "Board Certified Diplomate, American Board of Examiners in Clinical Social Work, BCD #_____." The MCO will then verify your BCD with ABE and you will henceforth be identified as a verified board-certified clinical social worker within the MCO network.

Never Procrastinate Indefinitely-
Get Your National Provider Identifier (NPI)

By Michael Brooks, MSW, BCD

Okay, I did it! My internal deadline had passed; the insurance companies had started nagging me; and May 23, 2007, had begun to loom, hatchet in hand, to cut off non-NPI practitioners from payments by insurance companies and Medicare. What am I talking about? It's the new National Provider Identifier, the permutation of HIPAA (federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) that creates a 10-digit personal identifier for every clinician who bills a third-party payor. One Clinician, One Number is the concept: NPI replaces all other such identifiers (Social Security Numbers, Employer

ID Numbers, Taxpayer Identification Numbers, insurance company ID numbers, UPIN, etc). The Feds claim that your NPI will eliminate confusion, streamline billing and payment, and speed electronic transactions.

"I'm not a HIPAA practitioner", you say. "I bill by hand, not electronically." But if you bill third parties for your services, HIPAA compliance is the way you have to go. According to the health plans, participating providers must observe HIPAA standards. (By the way, one of the biggest health plans, UBH, has announced that it will no longer accept hand-written claim forms. That usually means using a computer to fill out CMS-1500 forms in an electronic record, thus bringing you under the HIPAA rules.)

The federal Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) estimates that, after getting your NPI and sharing it with the third parties with whom you work, it will take them approximately 120 days to get their bookkeeping straight. This means that if you do not want a serious cash flow disruption in your practice, you should get your NPI NOW. Every insurance company has its own procedures for hearing from you, some by fax, some by mail, some online, and some by all of the above. There is, of course, no such thing as a standard notification form.

When I finally did what I knew I had to, getting the NPI was easy, and third-party notifications were most time-consuming. To apply for the NPI online, go to: <http://nppes.cms.hhs.gov/NPPES/Welcome.do>. To request a paper based application by phone, call 1 800 465 3202 or TYY 1 800 692 2326. To request a paper application by mail, write to: NPI Enumerator/PO Box 6059/Fargo, ND 58108-6059. To request an application by e-mail: customerservice@npienumerator.com.

I did mine online. I found that it took about 15 minutes. It is a simple step-by-step format, and if you follow the directions, it works very well. (One trick they suggest, and I found useful, is to print each completed application page before hitting the "Next" button. That way you have a copy for your records at the end!) I expected the usual 2-3 week delay in receiving my number, but I received it in an email about 20 minutes after I finished my application. Then it took about ninety minutes to find the forms and processes that are required to let "my" health plans know about my spiffy new NPI.