

Internal Medicine Coding Alert

Reader Questions: CMS Offers You an ABN Reprieve

Question: Our practice has struggled to implement Medicare's new advance beneficiary notice (ABN) form. We know we were supposed to start using the new ABN Sept. 1. What ramifications do we face for not meeting the deadline? Will Medicare accept the old form, or are we forfeiting payment on every procedure we use the old ABN for?

California Subscriber

Answer: You can stop worrying -- but you should still implement a plan of action to start using the new ABN.

While the original Sept. 1 deadline for implementing the new ABN has come and gone, you won't yet face any ill effects for not being ready. CMS changed the deadline at the last minute, now allowing practices to wait until March 1, 2009, to begin using the revised ABN.

History: Earlier this year, CMS unveiled its new ABN. The new form not only replaced both the previous ABN-G (for physicians) and ABN-L (for laboratories), but also incorporated the notice of exclusions from Medicare benefits (NEMB) form.

Medicare carriers began accepting the new ABN form in March, but CMS has now extended the transition period, allowing you until next year to prepare for the new form.

Get help: CMS has issued a MLN Matters article regarding the new ABN, which reminds providers to use the new form in mandatory and voluntary ABN situations.

To read the MLN Matters article outlining the details of the new ABN form, visit the CMS Web site at www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNMattersArticles/downloads/MM6136.pdf.