

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

ICD-10: Start Your ICD-10 Assessment Process Now, CMS Experts Say

Tip: Contact your vendor to determine steps it is taking toward ICD-10.

With all eyes on the proposed Oct. 2011 deadline for ICD-10 implementation, CMS encourages you to prepare now in case that proposed rule becomes final.

During a CMS-sponsored ICD-10 National Provider Call on Nov. 12, presenters reminded practices and hospitals to determine where you'll need extra help in transitioning to ICD-10.

And if you figure you'll cross that bridge when the implementation date is finalized, you may end up behind the eight ball.

"Don't wait for the final rule, because you're wasting precious time," said **Nelly Leon-Chisen, RHIA**, director of coding and classification with the American Hospital Association. "Get started right away if you haven't done so."

Leon-Chisen recommends conducting systems inventories now to determine the databases that use ICD-9-CM. That way, you can determine which software programs you have, and whether you need to work with your vendors to determine their

plans for ICD-10 implementation.

If you have a homemade software program, find out whether you have the resources internally to change the system to prepare for ICD-10, or whether you'll need outside help to migrate to the new system, Leon-Chisen advised.

Your vendor probably won't be ICD-10 ready at this point, but it's a good idea to touch base with your representatives at your vendor's office to determine their status.

"Vendors are participating in the comment process and you should initiate a dialogue with your vendor to determine whether they're aware of ICD-10 and are proceeding with ways to incorporate it," explained **Pat Brooks, RHIA**, a technical advisor

with CMS.

"We have not put out a final rule, and until such time as there's a definitive date to move forward, I don't believe it would be possible for many vendors to have a firm timeline yet" for ICD-10 conversion, Brooks advised.