

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

Physician Notes: Updated ABN Forms Are Required by the End of August

Plus: Medicare telehealth changes could become permanent.

If you're updating your compliance protocols, you may want to add the updated Advance Beneficiary Notice (ABN) form to your to-do list for a start date of Aug. 31.

The ABN form (CMS-R-131) "and form instructions have been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for renewal," the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) says in a June 24 message to providers. "The use of the renewed form with the expiration date of 06/30/2023 will be mandatory on 8/31/2020."

The ABN form and instructions are at www.cms.gov/Medicare/Medicare-General-Information/BNI/ABN.

In other news...

The COVID-19-inspired, Medicare telehealth expansion has been a relief for Part B providers and their patients. Not only have the waivers and flexibilities helped to stem the spread of the virus, but they've also allowed clinicians to connect with patients and offer services to vulnerable beneficiaries.

Now: The relaxed federal restrictions have encouraged more Medicare providers - and patients - to jump on the telehealth bandwagon. The ready access has been a lifeline to many, and that's why bipartisan efforts are underway in both the House of Representatives and Senate to encourage the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Service (CMS) to make the changes permanent.

In addition to several bills on the table to extend the 1135 telehealth waiver benefits in both congressional chambers, the Senate heard testimony from industry insiders, including American Telemedicine Association (ATA) President **Joseph C. Kvedar, MD**, who urged legislators to push for telehealth reform.



"I have seen firsthand the many ways telehealth bridges the gap between a critical provider shortage and a growing patient population - a problem that existed prior to the pandemic, and one that will only worsen," said Kvedar before the Senate. "However, we need Congress' support to ensure patients and providers do not go over the telehealth 'cliff' as our nation eventually emerges from the pandemic."

Industry: On June 29, more than 340 organizations sent a letter to Congress advocating for keeping the telehealth flexibilities. Read the letter at <http://connectwithcare.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Post-COVID-Telehealth-Priorities-Group-Letter-FIN.pdf>.

Senate: On July 2, that correspondence was followed by a bipartisan letter signed by 35 senators, highlighting the benefits of the telehealth expansion during COVID-19. The letter recommends CMS and HHS take action to update policies, and plan now for a post-pandemic world. Find the Senate's letter at www.cassidy.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/LTO.20.7.2.SmithCassidyTelehealthLetter-2.pdf.