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ICD-10 Update: CMS Proposes One-Year Delay for ICD-10

Don't slow down your preparations, experts advise.

Have you been waiting and wondering how to make contingency plans ever since HHS Secretary **Kathleen Sebelius** announced on Feb. 16 that the government would delay the deadline for the planned ICD-10 conversion, but failed to designate a new implementation date? You'll be happy to hear that the latest word on the oddly controversial change offers you something to aim for.

The **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services** (CMS) has announced a proposed new deadline for the transition: Oct. 1, 2014. That's one year later than the October 2013 date currently in effect. CMS announced the proposal on April 9 as part of a rule that also includes other HIPAA-related provisions.

"Many provider groups have expressed serious concerns about their ability to meet the Oct. 1, 2013, compliance date," CMS says in a release. "The proposed change in the compliance date for ICD-10 would give providers and other covered entities more time to prepare and fully test their systems to ensure a smooth and coordinated transition to these new code sets."

Provider Community Offers Mixed Reviews

Some providers are breathing a sigh of relief that they have an extra year to switch to ICD-10. But others say that they are frustrated that their intensive ICD-10 preparation is getting stalled at this late date.

The **American Medical Association**, which was a vocal proponent of an ICD-10 implementation delay, cheered the news. "The American Medical Association and physicians across the nation appreciate that CMS has proposed delaying the ICD-10 implementation date to October 1, 2014," said **Peter W. Carmel, MD**, the AMA's president. "The postponement is the first of many steps that regulators need to take to reduce the number of costly, time-consuming regulatory burdens that physicians are shouldering."

The **American Health Information Management Association**, on the other hand had been urging CMS not to put the brakes on the existing transition date citing potential increased costs as well as the adverse impact on healthcare data of continuing to use "the outdated and broken ICD-9-CM system."

"Our preference is for no delay in ICD-10 implementation and compliance," said AHIMA CEO **Lynne Thomas Gordon, MBA, RHIA, FACHE**, in a release. "But we are gratified that HHS is recognizing the hard work and efforts already expended in the implementation process and has decided to keep the extension to essentially the shortest period possible -- just one year." AHIMA had previously expressed concern about the potential delay and continues to encourage providers to remain focused on their implementation efforts.

"The transition to ICD-10 is inevitable and remains the future for coding classification systems. We are sorry to see that our members and organizations following HHS' initial calendar may suffer from the delay, as will our many higher education colleges and universities that changed their curricula to meet this same requirement date," **Thomas Gordon** said.

Don't Carve New Date in Stone

"ICD-10-CM is not delayed until October 1, 2014," coding expert **Lisa Selman-Holman** cautions. The new deadline is merely a proposal. "The healthcare industry has the opportunity to comment on the proposal and then CMS can publish a final rule," notes Selman-Holman with **Selman-Holman & Associates** and **CoDR -- Coding Done Right** in Denton, Texas.

The billions this delay is expected to cost providers may stymie the delay. "Only time will tell," Selman-Holman says.

Comments on the proposed rule are due by May 17. To comment on the CMS proposal, which can be viewed in the Federal Register at http://www.ofr.gov/OFRUpload/OFRData/2012-08718_P1.pdf, visit www.regulations.gov and refer to "CMS-0040-P."