MDS Alert

MDS News To Use

If you obtain a National Provider Identifier (NPI), make sure to enter it correctly at W1. Coding an NPI in the new Section W is optional until May 23, 2007, when the Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act mandates providers conducting electronic transactions to use the identifier. Thus, nursing home providers that obtain and code their NPI on the MDS will be ahead of the compliance curve.

The NPI coded at W1 has to match the NPI in the header record.

Watch out: If you submit [an NPI at W1] with dashes or embedded spaces--or if the identifier is something other than the 10 numeric digits--you'll get a fatal error message, explains **Peter Arbuthnot**, regulatory industry analyst for **American HealthTech Inc.,** an MDS software provider in Jackson, MS. A fatal error means the state database didn't accept the MDS. And you aren't supposed to bill Medicare for days covered by an MDS until the assessment is in the state repository.

"So check the validation reports the first time you submit the NPI to ensure the MDS was accepted by the state database," Arbuthnot advises.

Providers may apply for their NPI on the National Plan and Provider Enumeration System Web site at https://nppes.cms.hhs.gov.

Editor's note: Read a new Medlearn Matters article on Medicare's implementation of the NPI at www.cms.hhs.gov/medlearn/matters/mmarticles/2005/SE0555.pdf.