

OASIS Alert

Industry Notes: HHAs NEXT IN LINE

Home health agencies might want to take notes on the **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services** new Nursing Home Quality Initiative, to prepare for when its their turn.

The **Department of Health and Human Services** April 24 released new, facility-specific quality data on nursing homes in Colorado, Florida, Maryland, Ohio, Rhode Island and Washington. The information is accessible on CMS Web site.

Along with the data initiative, Medicare's quality improvement organizations (QIOs) will work with nursing homes to develop systemic changes that will improve patient care.

CMS already has announced that QIOs will begin working with HHAs this fall on their outcome-based quality improvement efforts. The third prong of the quality effort, HHS says, is continued enforcement by state survey agencies.

"[B]y the end of this year we expect to see some [kind of] quality initiative for consumers to be forthcoming from CMS for home health," AAHs **Ann Howard** said at a recent teleconference. "And those 10 to 15 outcomes could very well come from the 41 items on the OBQI report."

The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations will change its ORYX reporting requirements effective January 2003, it says in its latest Home Care Bulletin.

JCAHO will allow HHAs to self-report aggregate OASIS data via the Web or to continue using current ORYX requirements. ORYX will be suspended for home medical equipment suppliers "until core measures are identified." For other home care organizations, JCAHO will require internal data collection and usage, but won't mandate data transmission, or the organizations can continue using current ORYX requirements.

CMS goofed on the latest PC Pricer download file, it admits. The agency posted the file without the MSA table the software requires to wage adjust payments, resulting in an error stating "invalid MS code" on all claims.

Users should discard the April 23 file and go to www.hcfa.gov/medicare/nm75ght/pricdnld.htm to download the newly completed May 10 file, CMS instructs. The PC Pricer software calculates payments under the home health prospective payment system and is updated quarterly.

HHAs that participate in the Hospital & Healthcare Compensation Services latest salary and benefits survey will receive 50 percent off the report, says the Oakland, NJ-based company. The survey, a cooperative effort between HCS and the **National Association for Home Care**, will cover salary, hourly and per visit data on 72 jobs. More information is at www.hcsinc.com.