

OASIS Alert

News You Can Use: HIM 11 Is Becoming Obsolete

If your agency's computer services are inadequate, here's one more reason to quickly improve your information technology.

As if home health agencies don't have enough to worry about this fall, Oct. 1 also marks the beginning of a transition from paper-based manual to Web-based manual, the **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services** said in a Sept. 12 announcement.

The government is phasing out the provider-specific, paper-based manuals in favor of eight new Internet-only manuals grouped into functional areas, CMS explains. Instead of a separate home health manual, CMS now will have eight manuals that providers must look to for subject-specific information: Pub. 100-01-Medicare General Information; Pub. 100-02-Medicare Benefit Policy; Pub. 100-03-Medicare National Coverage; Pub. 100-04-Medicare Claims Processing; Pub. 100-05-Medicare Secondary Payer; Pub. 100-06-Medicare Financial Management; Pub. 100-08-Medicare Program Integrity; and Pub. 100-09-Medicare Contractor Beneficiary.

But providers can't automatically switch to the new manuals, many of which are still under development. Instead, when CMS issues new information, it will update the Internet-only manuals and delete information from the paper-based manuals.

"We will continue this phase-out/phase-in process until all manual instructions are included in the CMS Manual System," CMS says on its new manual Web site. "In the meantime, you should check both sets of manuals for current policy and procedures."

CMS says it is developing a crosswalk from the old to new manuals that should help providers find information. It undertook the manual revision to eliminate redundancy between manuals, it says. A switch to Internet-only manuals was inevitable, experts say.

An explanation of and links to the new manual system are at www.cms.hhs.gov/manuals. The notification is at www.cms.gov/manuals/pm_trans/R2OTN.pdf.

1. In response to a provider question about activities measured in M0680, CMS says "there are no specific OASIS items that address using the toilet or commode," reports the **National Association for Home Care & Hospice**. M0680 specifically focuses on a patient's ability to get to and from the toilet safely, not on ability to remove clothing or use the toilet, according to CMS staff. And it does not duplicate M0700, which "is much broader, focusing on mobility over a variety of surfaces," NAHC reports.
2. Agencies concerned about consistency and accuracy of abbreviations used **on the OASIS assessment** will welcome an announcement from the **Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations** in Oakbrook Terrace, IL. As part of its focus on patient safety, the accrediting organization is developing a list of "commonly misunderstood abbreviations, acronyms and symbols and a corresponding list of preferred terms in order to provide additional guidance for organizational compliance with National Patient Safety Goal 2b," JCAHO says. The list will be available on its Web site later this year.

3. **Add three new SARS-related diagnosis codes to the list** that takes effect Oct. 1. Codes for SARS-associated coronavirus (079.82), pneumonia due to SARS-associated coronavirus (480.3) and exposure to SARS-associated coronavirus (V01.82) were left off CMS' original list to its contractors because the **National Center for Health Statistics** only recently issued the new codes, CMS says in Aug. 22 memo AB-03-129.