



Medicare: Today's Issue

April 15, 2004

BETTER BENEFITS – MORE CHOICES

*Good News about the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement
and Modernization Act of 2003!*

How does the MMA Improve Provider Education?

- ❖ Medicare claims processing contractors provide extensive outreach to providers, educating them about billing and coding issues as well as responding to provider inquiries. **Several provisions to strengthen and enhance Medicare's ongoing efforts to educate the provider community are included in the MMA.**

Strengthened Provider Education Under the MMA

- ❖ To **maximize the effectiveness of Federal provider education efforts**, the MMA requires the Secretary to **coordinate the education activities provided by Medicare contractors and authorizes additional resources for provider education and training.**
- ❖ Medicare contractors will be required to **maintain Internet websites to provide answers to frequently asked questions in easily accessible** and links to the contractor's published materials related to the Medicare program.
- ❖ Additionally, the MMA requires **prompt and accurate written responses from Medicare contractors to inquiries from providers and beneficiaries**, requiring written within 45 days.
- ❖ To give Medicare contractors an incentive to **implement effective provider education and outreach efforts**, the MMA requires the development of contractor-specific claims payment error rates.
- ❖ Recognizing the importance of provider education, the **MMA includes provider education, communication, and consultative services in the list of functions Medicare Administrative Contractors—the new contractors created under contracting reform—must perform.**
- ❖ Medicare contractors are directed to **tailor education and training activities to meet the special needs of small providers and suppliers.**
- ❖ The MMA also establishes a **demonstration program under which small providers and suppliers would receive technical assistance**, including direct and in-person examination of billing systems and internal controls to determine provider compliance and to suggest more efficient or effective means of achieving compliance. In exchange, small providers and suppliers would pay 25 percent of the cost of the technical assistance.
- ❖ To **encourage provider participation and attendance in training**, the MMA prohibits Medicare contractors from using a record of attendance at (or failure to attend) educational activities or information gathered at educational activities to select or track providers and suppliers for audit or prepayment review.