

U.S. House and Senate Notification
Tuesday, April 6, 2010

To: Congressional Health Staff

From: Amy Hall
Director, Office of Legislation
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services

Re: HHS Debuts Open Government Plan and CMS Launches Dashboard

Today, in response to the White House's Open Government Directive for executive departments and agencies to take action to implement the principles of transparency, participation, and collaboration, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) debuted an initial Open Government Plan. As part of this initiative to promote open government, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) launched the Medicare Dashboard Beta, an electronic tool that uses inpatient hospital payment and volume information to visualize trends in the use of and costs for certain covered services under original fee-for-service Medicare.

By simplifying and making data more accessible through tools like the Dashboard, CMS hopes the questions asked and answered by researchers and policymakers will continue to accelerate efforts to improve the nation's health care delivery and payment systems. For example, the Dashboard can help decision makers quickly compare utilization rates of hospitals around the state and country to help them address issues of utilization and costs.

Because the data is collected as part of the claims processing cycle, the data may change over time as claims become finalized. The data contained in this Beta version is current as of March 2010, for inpatient discharges from January 2006 to December 2009. The Dashboard does not include any inpatient spending for beneficiaries enrolled in Medicare Advantage plans. The new tool is available at www.cms.hhs.gov/dashboard.

In addition, to promote transparency and improve public understanding of the Medicare and Medicaid programs, CMS will be making available to the public, free of charge, basic Medicare utilization and Medicaid State Plan documents.

Medicare claim "basic files" will be released from September to December 2010 for free public download on Data.gov. These files of claims data covering all types of care for a 5% sample of the original fee-for-service Medicare population will contain a limited number of variables and be de-identified and configured through a rigorous process, working in close consultation with privacy experts, re-identification experts, researchers, and key stakeholders, to ensure the protection of beneficiary privacy and confidentiality. The claims information in these files will not be linked to individual providers.

The Medicare Part B National Summary File, which provides the volume of physician services delivered to Medicare beneficiaries (by procedure) and how much Medicare paid for those services (in total) at the aggregate, Medicare-wide level, will also be available at no

charge. This file was previously available to the public for a fee of \$100 per year and only on CD ROM.

Medicaid State Plan documents will also be available online, such as each state's Medicaid plan, including benefits provided, populations covered, and amendments as filed on an ongoing basis.

In addition, significant improvements have been made to the user interface and analytical tool to access existing CMS COMPARE data on provider quality (at data.medicare.gov). Along with other HHS agencies, CMS will participate in the new Community Health Data Initiative, which will include state and regional aggregate indicators of Medicare health care costs, quality, prevalence of disease, and utilization of service.

The Open Government Plan is available at www.hhs.gov/open. At 12pm, Wednesday, April 7th, there will be a live webcast presentation of the Plan at www.hhs.gov/live.

If you have any questions about this announcement, please contact the CMS Office of Legislation.

Thank you.