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TO: All Current and Prospective Special Needs Plans as well as interested Medicare Advantage, Prescription Drug Plan, Cost, and Demonstration Organizations

FROM: Teresa DeCaro RN, M.S., Acting Director, Medicare Drug and Health Plan Contract Administration Group

SUBJECT: Open Door Forum Announcement

DATE: August 25, 2008

CMS will conduct an Open Door Forum to announce the convening of the Special Needs Plan Chronic Condition Panel. The panel will determine the conditions that meet the definition of severe or disabling chronic conditions in accordance with Public Law 110-275, Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008. The forum will be held via audio-conference on September 10, 2008.

We will announce the names of the panel members as well as solicit written comments regarding the determination of the conditions that meet the definition of severe and disabling chronic conditions under section 1859(b)(6)(B)(iii) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395w-28(b)(6)(B)(iii)). The aforementioned law defines “Severe or Disabling Chronic Conditions Specialized Needs Individual”-

- (1) IN GENERAL- Section 1859(b)(6)(B)(iii) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395w-28(b)(6)(B)(iii)) is amended by inserting ‘who have one or more co morbid and medically complex chronic conditions that are substantially disabling or life threatening, have a high risk of hospitalization or other significant adverse health outcomes, and require specialized delivery systems across domains of care’ before the period at the end.

We are most interested in comments related to identifying the set of chronic conditions having significant medical, psychosocial, mental, and functional effects that require specialized care as prescribed by the law. CMS encourages consideration of conditions that lend themselves to effective care management and service delivery under a capitated health plan arrangement. In addition to commenting on criteria the panel may use for selecting conditions, we urge commentors to also consider the need for face validity and administrative feasibility. Those interested in responding to CMS’ request for written comments are invited to send them to SNPpanel@cms.hhs.gov beginning September 10, 2008 through October 8, 2008.

If you have questions about this memo, please contact Carlene Randolph at carlene.randolph@cms.hhs.gov or at 410-786-4008. Thank you.