

FY 2016 Hospital Wage Index Development Timetable - TENTATIVE

(May 2014 through September 2015)

***Note: For FY 2016, CMS is changing the Wage Index Development Timetable. The FY 2016 Wage Index Development process now starts in May, with the posting of the Preliminary PUF in May (previously posted in September/October). Consequently, certain subsequent dates in the FY 2016 Wage Index Development process are also earlier than in previous years. In addition, the preliminary wage index and occupational mix files are being posted separately. Please pay careful attention to the new due dates and deadlines.**

Date:

Task:

***Late May 2014**

Release of preliminary FY 2016 wage index file based on unaudited FY 2012 Worksheet S-3 wage data file. The FY 2012 wage data file includes Worksheet S-3 wage data from cost reports submitted to MACs through approximately May 14, 2014. The files exclude hospitals designated as CAHs.

Notice sent from CMS to MACs regarding the early October 2014 deadline for hospitals to request revisions to the wage index data as reflected in the preliminary file. Notice must be forwarded by the MACs to hospitals they service to alert hospitals to the availability of the preliminary wage data file for their review and to inform hospitals regarding their final opportunity to request revisions.

***Early to Mid-July 2014**

Release of preliminary CY 2013 Occupational Mix Survey Data, based on CY 2013 occupational mix surveys submitted by hospitals to MACs by July 1, 2014. The files exclude hospitals designated as CAHs.

Notice sent from CMS to MACs regarding the early October 2014 deadline for hospitals to request revisions to the occupational mix data as reflected in the preliminary file. Notice must be forwarded by the MACs to hospitals they service to alert hospitals to the availability of the preliminary occupational mix data file for their review and to inform hospitals regarding their final opportunity to request revisions.

***Early October 2014**

Deadline for hospitals to request revisions to their Worksheet S-3 wage data and occupational mix data as included in the preliminary PUFs and to provide documentation to support the request. **MACs must receive the revision requests and supporting documentation by this date [to be specified by CMS].** MACs will have approximately 9 weeks to complete their reviews, make determinations, and transmit revised data to CMS's Division of Acute Care (DAC).

Deadline for MACs to notify State hospital associations regarding hospitals that fail to respond to issues raised during the desk reviews. The purpose of the letter is to inform the State association and its member hospitals that a hospital's failure to respond to matters raised by the MAC can result in lowering an area's wage index value and, therefore, lower Medicare payments for all hospitals in the area.

***Mid December 2014**

Deadline for MACs to complete all desk reviews for hospital wage data and transmit revised Worksheet S-3 wage data and occupational mix data to DAC. Worksheet S-3 wage data must be sent to DAC in electronic format (HCRIS HDT format).

Occupational mix data must be sent to DAC on the Excel spreadsheet provided by DAC for specific use by MACs.

Mid to Late February 2015

Release of revised FY 2016 wage index and occupational mix files as PUFs on the CMS Web site. These data will have been desk reviewed and verified by the MACs before being published. Also, a file including each urban and rural area's average hourly wages for the FYs 2015 (final) and 2016 (preliminary) wage indexes will be provided on the CMS Web site.

Early March 2015

Deadline for hospitals to submit requests (including supporting documentation) for: 1) corrections to errors in the February PUFs due to CMS or MAC mishandling of the wage index or occupational mix data, or 2) revisions of desk review adjustments to their wage index or occupational mix data as included in the February PUFs (and to provide documentation to support the request). **MACs must receive the requests and supporting documentation by this date.** No new requests for wage index and occupational mix data revisions will be accepted by the MACs at this point, as it is too late in the process for MACs to handle data that is new in a timely manner.

April/May 2015

Approximate date proposed rule will be published; includes proposed wage index, which is calculated based on the revised wage index data from February; 60-day public comment period and 45-day withdrawal deadline for hospitals applying for geographic reclassification.

Early April 2015

Deadline for the following:

1. MACs to transmit final revised wage index data (in HCRIS HDT format) to DAC for inclusion in the final wage index. Worksheet S-3 wage data must be transmitted in HCRIS HDT format. Occupational mix data must be sent to DAC on the Excel spreadsheet provided by DAC for specific use by MACs. All data revisions must be transmitted to DAC by this date.
2. MACs must also send written response to hospitals regarding the hospitals' early March 2015, correction/revision requests by this date.

Mid April 2015

Deadline for hospitals to appeal MAC determinations and request CMS' intervention in cases where the hospital disagrees with the MAC's determination. It should be noted that during this review, CMS does not consider issues such as the adequacy of a hospital's supporting documentation, as CMS believes that the MACs are generally in the best position to make evaluations regarding the appropriateness of these types of issues (which should have been resolved earlier in the process). **Requests must be received by CMS by this date. A copy of the appeal with complete documentation shall be sent to the MAC.** The request must include all correspondence between the hospital and MAC that documents the hospital's attempt to resolve the dispute earlier in the process. Data that was incorrect in the preliminary or February wage index data PUFs, but for which no correction request was received by the early March 2015 deadline, will not be considered for correction at this stage.

Note: Hospitals shall send an electronic and a hard copy of the appeal with complete documentation supporting their request; appeals submitted via fax will NOT be accepted. Electronic copies (including all supporting documentation) shall preferably be sent in PDF files to ensure compatibility with CMS software. Spreadsheets can be sent in Excel.

Appeals shall be sent electronically to wageindexreview@cms.hhs.gov

Hard Copies shall be sent to the CMS Central Office at:

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services c/o Wage Index,
CMM/HAPG/DAC
Room C4-08-06
7500 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, Maryland 21244-1850

Note: If the supporting documentation files being sent via email are too large to be sent through email, then send an electronic copy of only the appeal letter to the email address above (and note in the email that complete supporting documentation will be sent via hard copy); hospitals must still send a complete hard copy with supporting documentation to the address above.

Late April, 2015

Final FY 2016 wage index data compiled and sent by CMS to MACs for verification. This verification of the final wage and occupational mix data by the MACs is necessary to ensure that the correct data for each hospital has been properly transmitted and received. The MACs will have approximately 1 week in which to complete the verification.

Notice sent from CMS to each MAC regarding the May 2015 release of the final FY 2016 wage index data PUFs and the June 2015 deadline for hospitals to request corrections to the wage and occupational mix data as reflected in the final files.

Notice must be forwarded by MACs to hospitals they service to alert hospitals to the availability of the final wage index and occupational mix data files for their review in the May 2015

PUF, and to inform hospitals that this will be their last opportunity to request corrections to errors in the final data. Changes to data will be limited to situations involving errors by CMS or the MAC that the hospital could not have known about before review of the final May PUFs. Data that was incorrect in the preliminary or February 2015 wage index data PUFs, but for which no correction request was received by the early March 2015 deadline, will not be considered for correction at this stage.

Early May 2015

Release of final FY 2016 wage index and occupational mix data PUFs on CMS Web page. Hospitals will have approximately 1 month to verify their data and submit correction requests to both CMS and their MAC to correct errors due to CMS or MAC mishandling of the final wage and occupational mix data.

Early June 2015

Deadline for hospitals to submit correction requests to **both** CMS and their MAC to correct errors due to CMS or MAC mishandling of the final wage and occupational mix data as posted in the May 2015 PUF. Changes to data will be limited to situations involving errors by CMS or the MAC that the hospital could not have known about before review of the final May PUFs. **CMS and the MACs must receive all requests by this date via mail and email to the addresses above.** NOTE: CMS emphasizes that data that were incorrect in the preliminary or February 2015 wage index data PUFs, but for which no correction request was received by the March 2015 deadline, will not be changed at this stage for inclusion in the wage index. Each correction request must include all information and supporting documentation needed for CMS and the MAC to determine whether or not the hospital's request meets the criteria for a correction to their data at this point in the wage index development. The MACs and DAC will review each request upon receipt and consult to determine whether or not the request qualifies for correction of the final wage or occupational mix data.

August 1, 2015

Approximate date for publication of the FY 2016 final rule; wage index includes final wage index data corrections.

October 1, 2015

Effective date of FY 2016 wage index.