

Center for Medicaid and State Operations/Survey and Certification Group

S&C-04-44

DATE: September 9, 2004

TO: State Survey Agency Directors

FROM: Director
Survey and Certification Group

SUBJECT: Availability and Implementation of the Pharmaceutical and Herbal Products Database

Letter Summary

- The majority of surveyors that participated in the study supported the use of a pharmaceutical database.
- States can choose to use the Internet or CD-ROM version or some combination within their allocation of database licenses.
- States that did not participate in the pilot study need to contact Ralph King within twenty days of signature of this letter to be placed on the distribution list.
- This is a voluntary program and there is no CMS requirement to use this database.

Background:

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has received feedback that surveyors desire more information on the complex topic of pharmaceutical drug and herbal product interactions. To address this need, CMS selected a commercial Pharmaceutical and Herbal Products Database for pilot testing. CMS ran three simultaneous pilot studies: (1) all States received one copy of the CD version for review by information technology professionals and surveyors; (2) four States ran more comprehensive pilots with numerous surveyors using the CD version; and (3) two CMS Regional Offices (ROs) had a number of surveyors pilot test the Internet version of the product. The following States participated in the pilot program: Alabama, Arizona, Connecticut, Florida, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Dakota, Oregon, Texas, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

Pilot Study Results:

Of those participating in the pilot study, the vast majority of surveyors supported the use of this database. The users tended to find the product easy to use and the information useful. Furthermore, most surveyors reported that they would like to continue using the tool. Some States did have some technical issues caused by the now obsolete Microsoft MSJVM or other JAVA capability issues, but the vendor with whom we conducted this study provided a workaround.

CD-ROM and Internet Versions:

States can choose to use the Internet or the CD-ROM version or some combination within their allocation of database licenses. The Internet version can be accessed from any computer connected to the Internet. Surveyors who use laptop computers during a survey would be able to access the database using the CD-ROM version. Each quarter, CMS will send a new CD-ROM to the States using this product, as the CD-ROMs are pre-programmed with a seven-month timer to cause the database to deactivate. The Internet version is updated monthly. This will ensure that surveyors have access only to the most current medication information.

Ordering and Distributing the Database:

Each Internet or CD-ROM license will count the same toward a State's total allocation of database licenses. CMS will determine the States' allocation once all requests for the database have been received. If your request exceeds your allocation, CMS will contact you to discuss the matter.

Please contact Ralph King within 20 days of signature of this letter if you would like to request use of this database. Also all participants should indicate the number of CD-ROM or Internet licenses (or a combination) that you would like and your name, mailing address, e-mail address, and telephone number.

The vendor will ship the respective quantity of copies of the CD-ROM to each State directly. Regional Offices will be provided Internet licenses as well as States that indicate they wish to have the Internet version. The vendor provides a URL and password for each user for the Internet version.

A Voluntary Program:

There is no CMS requirement to use this database.

Commercial Software:

This software is commercial. Please do not infringe on the license agreements, e.g. do not load this software on to servers. Each CD-ROM is licensed for loading onto only one computer, and each Internet license will consist of one user per password for use by the person assigned with that password.

Technical Support:

Additionally, the vendor will provide installation instructions for the CD-ROM, with a video help guide embedded on the CD-ROM, and a toll free number to answer questions and provide assistance. The toll free number for customer support is 866-650-8964.

Contact Information:

For administrative questions or to be placed on the distribution list, contact Ralph King by phone at 410-786-2018 or by e-mail at rking2@cms.hhs.gov. For technical issues, please contact Facts and Comparisons, Tim Cann at 866-650-8964.

Effective Date: This guidance is effective immediately.

Training: The information contained in this announcement should be shared with all surveyors, survey and certification staff, their managers, and the State and RO training coordinators.

/s/

Thomas E. Hamilton

CC: Survey and Certification Regional Office Management