

Medicare ESRD Network Organizations Manual

Chapter 6 - Community Information and Resources

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10 - Introduction

(Rev. 1, 07-11-03)

ENO 600

The Network coordinates and participates in activities with the renal community in the network area. The Network's role is to provide informational material, technical assistance and guidance, and/or referrals to the appropriate resources, to the facilities/providers and to the patients to improve the quality of care and the life of ESRD patients. The Network assumes a proactive role in the prevention, facilitation, and resolution of complaints and grievances, including implementing educational programs that will assist facility staff in handling difficult situations. The Network must be sensitive to the local needs of the renal community and continually familiarize that community, including organ procurement organizations, with its role.

20 - Provision of Educational Information

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ENO 605

To ensure that the renal community is apprised of the activities in its network area, the Network distributes, at least annually, the following informational and/or educational materials to its facilities/providers:

- ESRD program goals and Network activities to meet these goals;
- The Network's plan for monitoring facility compliance with the goals;

- Regional patterns or profiles of care as provided in the Clinical Performance Measures Annual Report;
- The Network's annual report;
- Results of the Network's quality improvement projects;
- Special mailings (assume two per year and 5-10 pages per mailing) as directed by CMS, including duplicating the materials, as necessary;
- Other materials (such as journal articles or pertinent research information) that facilities/providers can use in their quality improvement programs;
- The process for reporting and resolving patient grievances;
- Treatment options and new ESRD technologies available for patients;
- State/regional vocational rehabilitation programs available in the network area; and
- At a minimum, a letter of introduction to each new ESRD patient in the network area that includes:
 1. Information on the grievance procedure;
 2. Network specific information;
 3. A way to request/obtain additional educational materials on ESRD, patient care, treatment options, and services; and
 4. Information about the function of the Network's State agency, its address and phone number, and the fact that it receives and investigates complaints.

NOTE: The information to be distributed to new ESRD patients is subject to change by CMS in response to recommendations from the workgroup established to examine the creation of a national new ESRD patient orientation package.

The Network must comply with laws that prohibit excluding or denying individuals with disabilities an opportunity to receive the same information and assistance provided other ESRD patients who want to attend the Network-sponsored educational programs.

The Network establishes and/or maintains a user-friendly toll free number to facilitate communications with beneficiaries within its network area. At a minimum, the toll free

number must be advertised to patients through the New Patient Package letter of introduction, patient brochures, and on the Network's Web site.

The Network develops and/or maintains a Web site that follows CMS standards and guidelines. The Network's Web site must include at a minimum:

- The Network's grievance process;
- The location of the Network;
- Toll free number for patients to contact the Network;
- Current completed Annual Report;
- Network goals; and
- A link to the Medicare.gov Dialysis Facility Compare site (<http://www.medicare.gov/Dialysis/Home.asp>).

The Network directs the facilities/providers in the network area to make the information available to its patients or to inform patients about contacting them to obtain this information. The above materials can be distributed by mailings, handouts at meeting(s), newsletters, etc.

The Network reports quarterly to its project officer (PO) through the Quarterly Progress and Status Report the activities conducted to distribute the above types of material. If more resources than allocated are needed to conduct these activities, the Network contacts its PO for guidance in prioritizing work activities.

30 - Provision of Technical Assistance

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Upon request, the Network provides technical assistance, guidance, and/or appropriate referrals to facilities/providers and patients in the network area. At a minimum, the Network notifies facilities/providers annually that it is available to assist them in these areas:

- Identifying available providers for patients seeking ESRD services (including transient patients);

NOTE: The Network's role is complementary to the efforts of the local facility staff in making transient dialysis arrangements for the facility's patients.

- Assisting providers/facilities in the development of local disaster plans that include planning for such emergencies as floods, earthquakes, hurricanes, etc.;
- Assisting providers/facilities in the development of community and patient education programs;
- Assessing the functional status of patients through the dissemination of established tools designed specifically for that purpose;
- Promoting patient education regarding kidney transplantation and self-care home dialysis;
- Encouraging and assisting providers/facilities to do timely patient assessments and appropriate referrals for evaluation of kidney transplant;
- Addressing impediments to referrals and/or transplantation, as appropriate and feasible; and
- Defining or establishing rehabilitation goals for referring suitable candidates to vocational rehabilitation programs.

The Network is required to assist facilities/providers and patients (or provide the appropriate referral) upon request. If the Network is unable to assist all or some requestors because of resource limitations, the Network contacts its PO to discuss the situation(s) and obtain guidance for prioritizing work activities.

The Network reports quarterly to its PO through the Quarterly Progress and Status Report the activities or assistance it conducted or provided.

40 - Resolution of Difficult Situations and Grievances

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ENO 615

Assume a proactive role in the prevention, facilitation, and resolution of complaints and grievances, including implementing educational programs that will assist facility staff in handling difficult situations. Conduct trend analysis of reported situations to detect patterns of greater concern. The Network is responsible for, but not limited to, the following activities:

- Implementing educational programs designed to provide facility staff with an understanding of the issues and skills to prevent, intervene, or mitigate difficult patient and/or facility situations;

- Upon request, assisting in the resolution of patient, provider, and/or facility complaints, before they become formal grievances by providing education, and/or facilitating solutions and/or making referrals, which address the issue(s) involved;
- Describing and reporting in the Quarterly Progress and Status Report, patient and facility concerns/grievances and Network actions and interventions in a narrative format;
- Annually analyzing facility-specific data to identify patterns of concern at the facility or the Network level, and opportunities to improve;
- Implementing interventions aimed at reducing grievances and/or the numbers of difficult situations;
- Collecting and appropriately categorizing inquiries/complaints/grievance data using the Standard Information Management System (SIMS); and
- Utilizing grievance data to plan new training modules, provide facilities with feedback and/or make recommendations to CMS.

See [Chapter 7](#) of this manual for evaluating, resolving and reporting patient grievances and facility concerns. Refer immediate and serious grievances to the appropriate CMS regional office and State survey agency, within 24 hours of receipt. Upon request, assist the State survey agency with the investigation of a complaint.

Report on these activities in the Quarterly Progress and Status Report as required in [Chapter 2, §70](#).