

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
7500 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, Maryland 21244-1850



MEDICARE DRUG BENEFIT AND C & D DATA GROUP

CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN REQUEST

February 29, 2015

Contract ID: S6311

Sheila Nishimoto
Medicare Compliance Officer
Qualchoice Advantage
32129 Weyerhaeuser Way S.
Suite 201 Federal Way, Washington 98001

VIA EMAIL: Sheila.Nishimoto@prominencehealth.com

RE: Failure to Comply with CMS CY2016 Bid Instructions

Dear Ms. Nishimoto,

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is issuing a request for Qualchoice Advantage, (“Qualchoice”), which operates the Prescription Drug Plan (PDP) contract identified above, to develop and implement a corrective action plan (CAP) to address the organization’s failure to comply with CY2016 Part D bid submission requirements.

In the 2016 Call Letter (released on April 6, 2015, via the Health Plan Management System (HPMS)) and in an HPMS memo, entitled *Release of Contract Year (CY) 2016 Bid Upload Functionality in HPMS* (released on May 8, 2015), CMS provided instructions for submitting bid, initial actuarial certification, and benefit certification information. Part D program regulations at 42 C.F.R. § 423.265(c) state that each potential Part D sponsor must submit bids (and supplemental information specified by CMS) that reflect the features (e.g., premium amount, cost sharing) and projected cost estimates of each benefit package it expects to offer. For CY2016, sponsors provided their bid information through three different submissions: a proposed formulary, a Bid Pricing Tool (BPT), and a Plan Benefit Package (PBP) submitted together by the statutory June 1, 2015 deadline. In general, the PBP describes the structure of a proposed benefit package (e.g., co-pay amounts, deductibles) while the BPT describes the underlying basis used to calculate the price of the benefit package. The information in all three of these submissions must combine to reflect a consistent benefit package. Additionally, pursuant to 42 C.F.R. § 423.505(k)(4), the sponsor’s CEO or CFO must submit a certification (referred to as the “benefit certification”) that the information provided in each bid is accurate, complete, and truthful.

Federal regulations at 42 C.F.R. § 423.104(f)(2) state that a PDP sponsor may not offer enhanced alternative coverage in a service area unless the PDP sponsor also offers a prescription drug plan in that service area that provides basic prescription drug coverage. The regulations at 42 C.F.R. § 423.100 define “required prescription drug coverage” as the coverage of Part D drugs under either a basic prescription drug plan or an enhanced alternative plan.

Organizations are responsible for ensuring that complete and accurate CY 2016 bids were submitted by the June 1, 2015 deadline. Yet, the Part D portion of Qualchoice’s initial PDP bid failed to constitute required prescription drug coverage. This deficiency was discovered when CMS conducted a routine PDP basic offering analysis report. The report signaled that Qualchoice’s bid submission only contained enhanced alternative plans. The need for CMS to work with Qualchoice to correct its CY2016 bid to include this fundamental plan element indicates that it failed to comply with Part D regulatory requirements and follow CMS bid instructions.

CMS requests that your organization take corrective action to come into compliance. The first opportunity for Qualchoice to demonstrate that it has taken the necessary corrective action will be the 2017 bid cycle. Therefore, CMS requests that Qualchoice address these areas of noncompliance in the spring of 2016 leading up to the 2017 bid cycle. CMS will rely on Qualchoice’s 2017 bid submission to determine whether the corrective action plan has been successfully implemented. CMS will consider the CAP closed once the Division of Formulary and Benefit Operations has determined that Qualchoice’s 2017 bid submission demonstrates that it has effectively resolved the issues described above. Should your organization fail to be in compliance with these requirements in the future, CMS may consider taking enforcement actions in the form of the imposition of intermediate sanctions (e.g., the suspension of marketing and enrollment activities) or civil money penalties or the issuance of a contract termination notice.

Please be aware that this compliance notice will be included in the record of your organization’s past Medicare contract performance, which CMS will consider as part of our review of any application for new or expanded Medicare contracts your organization may submit. For past performance analysis purposes, this is considered a Part D issue without beneficiary impact. CMS notes that we are issuing this compliance notice based on information that we obtained from sources other than the sponsor’s own self-disclosure.

If you have any questions about this notice, please contact Michael Neuman at (410) 786-7069 or michael.neuman@cms.hhs.gov and copy your account manager.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer R. Shapiro". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jennifer Shapiro
Acting Director
Medicare Drug Benefit C & D Data Group

cc via email:

Linda Anders, CMS
Scott Nelson, CMS
Christopher Gillespie, CMS