

AHA NEWS! THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF ACCREDITATION HELPER, LLC

WWW.ACCREDITATIONHELPER.COM

866-984-3573

Spring 2009

AT ISSUE: Editor's View

Richard Cornwell, Director of Operations

While standing in line waiting to check in at the Las Vegas airport last week after leaving the recent Medtrade show, I watched with a bit of a gasp as my departure flight time for my flight flipped to "delayed". Delayed? No way, I whispered to myself! And then it hit me. "Delays" were not part of the vocabularies of suppliers at this year's show regarding accreditation. In fact, most attendee suppliers I talked with were either already accredited or had applied to an agency and were awaiting their survey. Unlike my flight, this "On time" mantra related to accreditation seemed to resonate throughout the show. I observed that overall attendance was slow at Accreditation Central from previous shows as well as at accreditor's booth exhibition traffic. A representative from The Joint Commission that I met with shared that since the CMS January soft accreditation deadline, inquiries for new DMEPOS applications had significantly slowed down. "Now what!" a voice screeched behind me and as I looked up and a new message flashed next to my flight: GATE CHANGE: SEE AGENT. In this inaugural edition of AHA News! our team's goals are to provide you with ongoing relevant news affecting your business, accreditation and the patients you serve, including those related to "changes" or unanticipated "delays". Our "Rumor Control" and "Survey Says" columns provide you updates from the industry and accreditation agencies. Our "Home Room" and "Business Beat" the platforms for our customers, our staff and industry experts to share with you valuable tips, resources and insights. And finally, "Jack's Corner", because from where I stand, no matter how many "delays" or "gate changes", the boss is always right!

RUMOR CONTROL

Although spring has definitely arrived, the winds have not provided the best news for suppliers on a variety of "hot button" issues: SURETY BONDS and OXYGEN to name just a few.

Clarified by CMS during their March 17, 2009 Open Door Forum panel discussion was CMS' position on SURETY BONDS. For all new suppliers seeking enrollment and all existing suppliers changing ownership or establishing a new location, posting a Surety Bond of no less than \$50,000 is required by May 4, 2009. Posting is required no later than October 2, 2009 for existing suppliers for each location. CMS also clarified that a bond posting is required where service is provided per active NPI. With SURETY BONDS a new reality for suppliers, ALL suppliers should be moving forward in this process post haste relative to the impacts on their business in the immediate term.

GREAT RESOURCE: www.fms.treas.gov

On March 20 2009, CMS clarified the much anticipated process for how payments will be made to suppliers for providing patient's oxygen equipment. For calendar year of 2009, suppliers will be paid "reasonable and necessary" maintenance every six months for HCPC's E1390, E1391, E1392 and K0738. In addition, suppliers are required to make an "in home" visit to inspect the equipment and provide any necessary equipment servicing. To view the CMS transmittal, GO TO:

www.cms.hhs.gov/transmittals/downloads/R461OTN.pdf

At Medtrade spring the DME MAC carriers announced several new initiatives beginning in April, 2009. On the education front all DME MAC carriers will be launching extensive (and impressive) education sessions. Primarily internet based in application, these carriers will

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RUMOR CONTROL (con't)

also be traveling throughout the United States hosting education seminars and workshops at no cost. For access to these carriers' schedules for upcoming events connect to our main website at: www.accreditationhelper.com and click on the RESOURCES tab, then scroll to the DME MAC carrier's website in your jurisdiction. Starting April 1, 2009 all DME MAC's will be using a "common carrier" payment and billing policy designating standardized labor times, where by suppliers will now be paid for any repairs by units of time. For example, Medicare will pay for two units (units defined as equaling 15 minutes worth of service) of service, i.e., 30 minutes of repair time total for a supplier to repair or replace a power wheelchair battery, which would include cleaning and testing. Medicare WOULD NOT reimburse for equipment delivery or pick up times. The DME MAC's also clarified that, "Suppliers are also reminded that Medicare does not pay for repairs to capped rental items during the rental period or under warranty".

HOME ROOM

Accreditation Helper's Board approved several new levels of customer support in February and March. First in February, Our CARE program was restructured in pricing and service levels. CARE now offers three levels for customers to choose from instead of just two. Our CARE and top tier CARE CONCIERGE levels, customers now have access to a HELPER throughout the entire accreditation process. Stay ahead of any potential "unannounced" survey from your accreditor or CMS, and be "Survey Ready" at all times through AH's CARE program. To learn more about CARE, including a demonstration of our CARE programs, contact Richard at Extension 712 today!

Secondly, in March, Accreditation Helper's Public Website was reformatted to now include a RESOURCES page. Located on the top tool bar on our website, this site content was created to provide you resources relevant to your business, accreditation and patient safety. Check it Out!

Have ideas on what we should add to our RESOURCES page for you OR in AHA News? Contact Richard at extension 712!

Did you know that Accreditation Helper's PREPARE program has been specifically designed to Fast Track suppliers in becoming survey ready? Completion of all required accreditation standard tasks combined with the support of an assigned HELPER enable you to be fully prepared for your survey in record time. One of our recent clients, Prism Medical Products, LLC in Elkin, NC experienced just this and completed all survey preparation in just around thirty days. Having a successful survey with The Joint Commission, Lucy Ketner, Prism's Office manager had this to say about Accreditation Helper's fast tracking capabilities:

"Accreditation Helper's website is user friendly with comforting one-on-one support, speeding up an otherwise tedious preparation process."

To learn more about PREPARE even if you have "procrastinated" on preparing for survey, contact Richard at extension 712 today!

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SURVEY SAYS!

The results are in and before our accreditation agency specific updates this month, Accreditation Helper reached out to all current clients with a customer satisfaction survey in early February. A nine question survey was e mailed to all current AH clients, providing them the opportunity to rate their experience with AH from poor to excellent in nine performance categories. Overall performance was rated by our customers as very good to excellent in all nine categories, including those related to usability of the AH software system, customer support throughout the entire process and Helper knowledge. Congratulations to all our team members responsible for these incredible results! Special recognition goes out to Jill Martin, for all her additional support and customer service during our peak enrollment times this past fall!

On March 6, 2009, in response to the increased number of calls we received relative to customers questions on accrediting agencies accepting applications for survey, AH found this: The following accreditors are currently taking applications, but if an enrolled suppliers application is not yet in, cannot guarantee a survey to meet the September 30, 2009 accreditation deadline: ACHC, BOC, HQAA and TJC. The following accreditors are currently taking applications and have issued the following additional statements: COMPLIANCE TEAM: "Survey readiness is on your schedule and we can have you ready in 3-4 months". CHAP: "Through our electronic application process and self study, CHAP is fully prepared to assist organizations in meeting the September 30, 2009 deadline".

In January, THE JOINT COMMISSION announced that accreditation decisions will now be based on a "criticality" model based on the immediacy of risk to the quality of patient care and patient safety. Suppliers selecting THE JOINT COMMISSION as their accrediting agency of choice are encouraged to pay particular attention to standard EP's (Elements of Performance) designated with a Tier 2 and Tier 3 designation for direct impact on the final accreditation decision. Primarily related to processes the organization has in place to promote patient safety, these standard EPs should be clearly developed and the systems put in place to monitor these standards for the long term in your company. AH's HELPER's working with JOINT COMMISSION clients understand the impact of these new Tier designation requirements and have incorporated these throughout your sessions.

BUSINESS BEAT

This month Accreditation Helper spotlights Jill Martin, RRT, our senior HELPER (not in people years). Jill's experience and passion in the area of Performance Improvement has provided exceptional value and support to our AH clients through the years. Often identified by suppliers as a challenging area as they work on developing an approach and plan to Performance improvement initiatives, Jill had these tips to share with suppliers: "Are you reviewing your collected QI Studies data on a quarterly basis?" "Have you and your staff identified any trends when reviewing this data?" "For initial surveys, your QI Plan should have established a plan for data collection and for reaccreditation, you will need to show twelve months of collected data. The importance of an "action plan" is key in your design and approach for those studies which did

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BUSINESS BEAT (con't)

not meet your established thresholds or goals." Jill had these additional comments for suppliers, when approaching QI, "It has been my experience that the QI Studies tools on the AH website have been very useful to clients in order to successfully accomplish QI Studies goals. For example, the Claims Processing measure is a prime example to demonstrate to customers the value of how collecting data related to billing errors can identify opportunities for improvement in their business". "The Claims Processing measure not only meets accreditation agencies QI requirements, but also CMS Quality Improvement standard requirements. And in these times of reduced reimbursement, billing correctly the first time is cost effective for its effect on a company's cash flow".

JACK'S CORNER

Jack Anderson, CEO

I want to thank all of you that participated in our Customer Satisfaction survey. It is always useful to hear what we can do to improve services that we offer. Of course I was thrilled to see that 98.8% would or already have, recommended us to another DME provider. That is high praise indeed, but the most important part is learning where we can make improvements.

I am off to the HME Business Summit this month and will give a report in our next newsletter.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Look for ACCREDITATION HELPER at The HME BUSINESS SUMMIT in Baltimore, MD. APRIL 21-23 at The Dynamic Energy System