WellCare Implementing National Provider Identifiers

In accordance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), WellCare is encouraging all health care providers in our network to begin obtaining their national provider identifier (NPI) as soon as possible. The national provider identifier (NPI) is a unique, government-issued standard identifier mandated by HIPAA.

As you plan to obtain your NPI, please keep in mind that HIPAA requires WellCare and other health plans to begin using NPIs by May 23, 2007. When implemented, your NPI will replace all other provider numbers. At that time, the NPI will be required for all "covered entities" for the submission of electronic claims, referrals, authorizations, and inquiries.

Your NPI will replace the use of legacy identifiers such as the Diamond provider ID number and unique physician identification number (UPIN). With few exceptions, the NPI is assigned for life. At this time, all providers of health care services who perform electronic transactions—including individual practitioners and organizations—will be required to obtain an NPI by 2007. Small providers have until May, 2008 to comply.

We recognize this may be a major change for some of you, and we are here to help you through the transition. Below are some frequently-asked questions and answers regarding NIP.

National Provider Identifier (NPI) FAQs

1. **What is a National Provider Identifier (NPI)?**
   The NPI is a unique 10-digit numeric identifier assigned to health care providers and organizations defined as covered entities under HIPAA.

2. **What are the significant dates associated with applying for and using an NPI?**
   1. May 23, 2005: HIPAA began responding to requests from health care providers for a NPI. Providers must apply to receive a NPI.
   2. May 23, 2007: By this date, all health care providers who utilize HIPAA standard electronic transactions *must* have a NPI. Providers who do not utilize HIPAA standard electronic transactions *may* have an NPI.
   3. May 23, 2007: By this date, all health plans and payers must have the capability to use the NPI to identify providers in standard electronic transactions.

3. **Who should obtain a NPI?**
   Any health care provider or organization defined as a covered entity under HIPAA is required to obtain a NPI. Providers who transmit health care information via HIPAA standard electronic transactions are covered entities under

HIPAA, whether they transmit the transactions themselves or use a vendor to transmit them.

4. **Where can additional information about HIPAA NPI regulations be found?**
    1. See the CMS website: http://new.cms.hhs.gov/NationalProvIdentStand/
    2. CMS has also consulted with the Workgroup for Electronic Data Interchange (WEDI) in the development of standards and for comments on data dissemination and other issues. WEDI has formed several workgroups consisting of representatives from all areas of the health care industry. See published "white papers" on various topics and other information on the WEDI website: www.wedi.org.