

TO: ALL PROVIDERS

FROM: CAREFIRST OF MARYLAND INC., MEDICARE PART A

DATE: DECEMBER 8, 2004

SUBJECT: COMPREHENSIVE ERROR RATE TESTING (CERT) NON-RESPONDERS

This notice is to alert providers of the high volume of claim denials due to providers' lack of response for records requested by the CERT contractor.

In order to improve the processing and medical decision-making involved with payment of Medicare claims, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) began a new program January 1, 2002 for Fiscal Intermediaries (FI). This program is called CERT and was implemented in order to achieve goals set for Federal agencies by the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993.

Under CERT, an independent contractor randomly selects a sample of claims processed by each Medicare contractor. AdvanceMed of Richmond, Virginia is the Program Safeguard Contractor working with CareFirst of MD, Inc. on this initiative. AdvanceMed's medical review staff evaluates whether CareFirst's decisions regarding the sampled claims are accurate and reflect established policy. CMS will use AdvanceMed's findings to help determine the underlying reasons for errors in claim payment or denials, and to implement appropriate corrective actions aimed toward improving the accuracy of claims processing across the nation.

The top categories of services having billing errors in the two most recent monthly reports received from AdvanceMed were:

1. Lab tests
2. Rehabilitation services (PT, OT, SLP)
3. Skilled Nursing Facility services

The feedback received by CareFirst of MD, Inc. on the sample of claims reviewed by the CERT contractor indicates that the primary reason for claim denial is due to a lack of response from providers to the requests for medical records to support the claim. **CareFirst is alerting providers to the risk of claim denial due to lack of response to AdvanceMed's requests for supporting documentation.** The CERT contractor has authority to deny claims that lack documentation, as well as those that do not meet other Medicare coverage guidelines.

In order to avoid denials, please notify individuals within your facility to be alert for requests for records coming from AdvanceMed. Please follow the directions on the request letter, and submit the documentation to AdvanceMed. It should be noted that this initiative is sponsored by CMS and there is no HIPAA violation in this process, as long as the facility follows its standard procedure.

AdvanceMed sends its letter requesting documentation to the address that is listed in the provider's file. If this is not the address where the documentation is kept, providers should make sure that the letter from the CERT contractor is forwarded to the appropriate person/location in their facility. The provider may also want to notify AdvanceMed concerning the correct address for requesting documentation in the future.

Be aware of the difference between ADR requests from the FI, CareFirst of MD, Inc., and the documentation requests from the CERT contractor, AdvanceMed. You must submit the documentation to the appropriate requestor. Medical records sent to the wrong entity will be returned, possibly resulting in a lack of response denial.

To address the problem of non-response, CareFirst of MD, Inc. is now calling providers who do not respond promptly to the AdvanceMed's documentation request. The initial letter that is sent by the CERT contractor to the providers says that the documentation should be submitted within 90 days from the date of the letter. AdvanceMed notifies the provider if the requested documentation has not been received by 20 days after the initial letter. At this point, CareFirst of MD, Inc. will call the provider to make sure they received the request and to determine whether they have already responded or are in the process of responding. If they cannot locate the AdvanceMed letter, CareFirst of MD, Inc. will provide the CERT Claim Identification number to the provider. This number must be written on the top of the medical records that are submitted. If the provider wants AdvanceMed to send them a new letter or if they have any other questions relating to the documentation request, they can call AdvanceMed at 804-264-1778.

The medical records may then be sent to AdvanceMed at:

CERT Operation Center
Attention: Distribution/Disposition Department
1530 E. Parham Road
Richmond, VA 23228

Or by FAX at: 804-864-9980

CareFirst of MD, Inc. will periodically check reports provided by AdvanceMed to determine whether the information has subsequently been received. If not, CareFirst of MD, Inc. will make repeat phone calls to the provider to make sure they are complying.

Responding quickly to documentation requests from the CERT contractor will eliminate the need for these contacts. Providers should be aware that if information is not received by AdvanceMed, then an overpayment request will be initiated and the case will be referred to the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) for additional action.

If you have any questions you can contact our Provider Service line at 1-866-0488-0545.