

To: All Providers  
From: CareFirst of Maryland Inc.  
Subject: Comprehensive Error Rate Testing (CERT) Program  
Date: March 17, 2004

In order to improve the processing and medical decision making involved with payment of Medicare claims, CMS began a new program effective August 2000. This program is called CERT and is being implemented in order to achieve goals of the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993, which sets performance measurements for Federal agencies.

Under CERT, an independent contractor (AdvanceMed of Richmond, Virginia) will select a random sample of claims processed by each Medicare contractor. AdvanceMed's medical review staff (to include nurses, physicians, and other qualified healthcare practitioners) will then verify that the contractor decisions regarding the claims were accurate and based on sound policy. CMS will use the AdvanceMed findings to determine underlying reasons for errors in claims payments or denials, and to implement appropriate corrective actions aimed toward improvements in the accuracy of claims and systems of claims processing.

All Medicare contractors will undergo CERT review by AdvanceMed. On a monthly basis, AdvanceMed will request a small sample of claims, approximately 200 from each contractor, as the claims are entered into their system. AdvanceMed will follow the claims until they're adjudicated, and then compare the contractor's final claims decision with its own. Instances of incorrect processing (e.g., questions of medical necessity or inappropriate application of medical review policy, etc.) become targets for correction or improvement. Consequently, it is CMS's intent that the Medicare Trust Fund benefits from improved claims accuracy and payment processes.

How are providers and suppliers of sampled claims impacted by CERT?

You may be asked during AdvanceMed's review to provide more information such as medical records or certificates of medical necessity so that AdvanceMed can verify that billing was proper and that claims processing procedures were appropriate. You will be advised what documentation is needed and the name of your contact. **We encourage you to provide the information requested by AdvanceMed in a timely manner. Failure to provide the requested information will result in retraction of the claim payment.**

Medical Records should include a copy of the original request letter with its barcode and mail or fax to the following:

AdvanceMed  
CERT Operations Center  
Disposition Department – Distribution  
1530 E. Parham Road  
Richmond, VA. 23228  
Fax No: (804) 264-3268 and (804) 864-9980

General questions regarding the CERT initiative may be directed to the CERT Program, at (804) 264-1778. Otherwise, providers and suppliers will be contacted ONLY if their claim(s) is selected and AdvanceMed requires additional information.

Additional information regarding the CERT program can be found on the CMS Website in Change Request 2976 dated February 27, 2004.

*(Source CR 2976, Transmittal 67)*

**The effective and implementation date for this bulletin is March 12, 2004.**

**THIS BULLETIN SHOULD BE SHARED WITH ALL HEALTH CARE PRACTITIONERS AND MANAGERIAL MEMBERS OF THE PROVIDER/SUPPLIER STAFF. BULLETINS ISSUED AFTER OCTOBER 1, 1999 ARE AVAILABLE FROM OUR WEBSITE AT [WWW.MARYLANDMEDICARE.COM](http://WWW.MARYLANDMEDICARE.COM)**