

To All Providers: The following is a Press Release Statement from CMS regarding the HIPAA Extension

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STATEMENT OF RUBEN J. KING-SHAW, JR.
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ON HIPAA TRANSACTION EXTENSIONS

The Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act (HIPAA) was passed by Congress in 1996 to implement the use of standard formats for transmitting health care claims and other administrative transactions for health care providers who transmit health care transactions electronically, health plans, and health care clearinghouses. These transactions will simplify, improve efficiency, and encourage health care transactions to be conducted electronically. HIPAA requires compliance with the Transaction & Code Set Standards by October 16, 2002.

However, the Administrative Simplification Compliance Act (ASCA) allows covered entities a one-year extension, as long as they submit a compliance plan by October 15, 2002, either by paper or – preferably – electronically at www.cms.hhs.gov/hipaa/hipaa2/ascaform.asp. By filing for the one-year extension, health care providers will have until October 16, 2003 to become HIPAA compliant. CMS is encouraging everyone to submit their compliance plans now, and to implement and test the new standards as soon as possible. Electronic filing is fast and easy, and a filer will know immediately that the extension has been received.

We are making all of our resources available to help health care providers file their extensions and achieve HIPAA compliance. We are already hosting periodic conference calls, forums for discussion and questions between providers and CMS. Anyone can participate, and the calls are free. CMS' HIPAA website (www.cms.hhs.gov/hipaa/hipaa2) offers schedules for upcoming roundtables and satellite broadcasts, as well as frequently asked questions and other useful materials. Questions may also be submitted by email at askhipaa@cms.hhs.gov or calling the HIPAA Hotline at (410) 786-4232.

We're doing everything we can to help people get ready in time, but the compliance deadline is rapidly approaching. If there's any doubt about whether you will be ready by October 16, then it's especially important that you file a request so you can take advantage of the one-year extension authorized by Congress.

