



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SENIOR SERVICES

PO BOX 360
TRENTON, N.J. 08625-0360

RICHARD J. CODEY
Acting Governor

www.nj.gov/health

FRED M. JACOBS, M.D., J.D.
Commissioner

BULLETIN
OMC 2005-04

TO: All Health Maintenance Organizations Doing Business in New Jersey, and all Insurers, Health Service Corporations, Medical Service Corporations, and Hospital Service Corporations offering Health Benefits Plans that are Managed Care Plans

FROM: Marilyn Dahl, Deputy Commissioner, New Jersey State Department of Health and Senior Services /s/MMD

DATE: August 2, 2005

RE: Physician Credentialing and Recredentialing Applications

The Department of Health and Senior Services (Department) has recently received a significant number of wholly or partially completed New Jersey Universal Physician Credentialing (NJUPC) and New Jersey Physician Recredentialing (NJPR) applications. To date, the Department has returned these completed applications to the senders whenever possible, with a cover letter explaining the sender's error, and re-directing the sender to the carrier(s) of interest, when known. In addition, the Department has received several requests from physicians' offices for hardcopies of the application forms, and the Department is aware that these specific requests have been made at the instruction of at least one carrier. The Department has fulfilled these requests.

The Department recognizes that human error is at play in some of these incidences, and cannot be entirely eradicated. However, the Department also has seen the instructions that at least one carrier sends to its applicants, and believes that the instructions propagate the problem of incorrect submissions and inquiries to the Department. The Department should not be put in the position of performing or augmenting the functions that are the obligation of carriers. The purpose of this Bulletin is to clarify the Department's role with respect to the NJUPC and NJPR, and in the credentialing and recredentialing process so that it is better understood by carriers offering managed care health plans.

As required by L. 2001, c. 88 (codified at N.J.S.A. 26:2S-7.1 through 7.3), the Department adopted new rules on December 1, 2003, at N.J.A.C. 8:38C-1, which established the NJUPC and NJPR forms, and standards for use of these forms by carriers that offer managed care plans. The operative date for carriers to begin accepting the forms was 180 days after the adoption of the forms by regulation, that being May 29, 2004. N.J.A.C. 8:38C-1 provides both the standards for using the applications as well as alternative information collection methods that carriers may use in lieu of the State credentialing and recredentialing forms.¹ It should be noted that whether the carrier must accept the forms is at the

¹ Other organizations have the option to use the forms as is or with modifications (although the Department notes that it has not made the forms available electronically to any parties for purposes of modification), and carriers may elect to use and/or accept the forms for health care providers other than physicians, but are not obligated to do so.

discretion of the physician, not the carrier. That is, all carriers must accept the form if the physician wants to use it, but carriers may encourage the use of other mechanisms set forth in the rules.²

The Department placed both forms and the instructions for filing them on the Department's website at: <http://www.state.nj/health/forms/index.shtml>³ for easy download and use by those with Internet access. Although paper copies of the forms may be obtained by anyone from the Department by contacting the Office of Managed Care in writing, the Department anticipates that carriers will provide paper copies to physicians directly when a physician makes such a request of a carrier. This is part of the carrier's obligation not merely to accept the forms when presented to them, but to make the forms readily available to physicians when the physicians indicate their preference in using the forms. Instructing a physician to contact the Department does not satisfy the obligation. It is not appropriate for a carrier to expect the Department to serve as a warehouse or fulfillment service on the carrier's behalf. Carriers should either maintain some paper copies of the forms, or print a copy of the form(s) when a physician makes such a request, and mail the copies to the physicians directly, rather than instructing the physician to make a separate request to the Department and expecting the Department routinely to perform the copying and mailing functions for these forms.

Of course physicians should be submitting completed applications to those carriers whose networks the physician is interested in joining, or the carrier's appropriate vendor(s). Information from carriers explaining to physicians about how to submit the completed forms should be clearly and unambiguously stated on this matter, and should be set forth prominently in instructions included with the forms and/or requests to update an existing file, and otherwise available from a carrier's Provider Relations or Credentialing Offices.⁴ Carriers should instruct physicians not to submit the completed forms to the Department as the Department does not credential health care providers, and may elect not to return the information or forward the forms or other information to any carrier or other organization. The Department notes that even when the Department chooses to return the forms to the sender, the misdirection of the information inevitably slows down the credentialing and recredentialing process, creating problems for physicians and carriers alike. The Department is interested in seeing the process move as smoothly as is reasonably possible, and in being kept apart from it.

Questions regarding the information contained in this Bulletin may be directed to Sylvia Allen-Ware, Director, Office of Managed Care, at (609) 633-0660.

² Although not the subject of this bulletin, the Department notes that it has received one or two complaints about carriers not accepting the NJUPC or NJPR, and is looking into these complaints. Carriers must accept these forms from physicians, and while carriers can request additional new information for credentialing or recredentialing purposes, carriers may not require physicians to use other forms or mechanisms in lieu of the NJUPC or NJPR.

³ The NJUPC and NJPR have been assigned internal form control numbers by the Department. Forms are listed in order on the website by their control numbers. The NJUPC is identified as MC-5, and the NJPR is identified as MC-6.

⁴ One set of instructions that the Department has seen provides information about how to obtain the forms from the Department as well as information about how to submit the completed forms to the carrier. However, information about obtaining the forms, with the Department's address and fax number, appears on the front page of the instructions, while the information about submitting the information, with the carrier's address and fax number, appears on a subsequent page. Careful readers look for and locate the appropriate information, but a fair number of readers seem to have simply sent the information to the first address and fax number they see.

