

IMS Advocate

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Key legislation

HF 35 – Requires certain new school buses to be equipped with seat belts. IMS supports.

HF 56 – Prohibits the use of thimerosal in pediatric influenza vaccinations. IMS opposes.

HF 65 – Creates a shaken baby syndrome prevention program in the Iowa Department of Public Health. IMS supports.

HSB 6/SSB 1002 – Requires insurance coverage for mental health conditions, including substance abuse treatment. IMS supports.

SF 3 – Provides a .08 blood alcohol limit for motorboat or sailboat operating. IMS supports.

SSB 1001 – Allows physician assistants to form a professional corporation. IMS opposes.

SSB 1061 – Creates a state False Claims Act. IMS opposes.

Recruiting, med staff webinars

IMS is hosting two valuable webinars in February. The first program deals with successful physician recruitment. It will be held February 11 from Noon–1:00 p.m.

The second webinar will help physicians increase knowledge in the area of medical staff rights, self-governance, and the development of medical staff bylaws. This will occur February 25 from 4:00–5:30 p.m.

To learn more about these webinars, which can be attended in-person or viewed online, access the “Upcoming Events” section of www.iowamedical.org.

Few occurrences in second week of legislative session

This week’s legislative activity was minimal, as Monday was the MLK holiday, Tuesday was the President’s inauguration, and Wednesday was the funeral of long-time legislator and former Senate Republican leader Mary Lundby.

The first Health and Human Services Appropriations subcommittee occurred this week and re-established the Mental Health Services subcommittee, which will meet regularly over the legislative session to study county-level system redesign. On a related note, **HSB 6**, the mental health/substance abuse parity bill, will be debated in committee Monday afternoon. It is expected to be passed out of committee and move to the full House for debate. IMS is a strong supporter of parity legislation.

Next week, the Governor is expected to release his budget, which will be of great interest to everyone. Stay tuned for more information.

IID files rules on retrospective payment during credentialing

The 2008 Iowa General Assembly passed IMS-sponsored legislation requiring health plans to retrospectively pay for medical services provided by a licensed physician while awaiting credentialing. Implementation of that law, effective July 1, 2008, has been delayed pending rules from the Iowa Insurance Division (IID), which sought input from the industry and from affected providers. Comments on the IID’s proposed rules are due by February 20, 2009; a public hearing is scheduled for 10:00 a.m. on that day at the IID offices. IMS will participate in this rulemaking. To read the proposed rules, visit www.iowamedical.org.

Clarification re: release of PHI for treatment of family member

The Office for Civil Rights, the agency that enforces the HIPAA privacy rule, clarified circumstances under which a physician may release protected health information (PHI) regarding a patient to another physician for purposes of treating a family member of that patient. Generally, a physician may, but is not required to, disclose medical information (not psychotherapy notes) regarding a patient to another physician for purposes of treating a family member without obtaining the patient’s consent. The advisories are at www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/familyhealthhistoryfaqs.pdf.

Remember Jan. 27 deadline on UHC Premium Designation

Over 3,000 Iowa physicians received a letter from UnitedHealthcare (UHC) regarding their status under UHC’s premium designation program (PDP). It is important that physicians read their reports on the Web site, <https://ereports.uhc.com/ReportCard>, with the log-in information set forth in their letters and, if appropriate, request reconsideration within the timeframe identified. Requests may be submitted electronically – be sure to include the physician’s designation detail report, the physician’s comments, and the physician’s signed attestation. Physicians experiencing problems may contact UHC’s PDP number at (866) 270-5588.



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Online Medicare enrollment rules appear onerous

During a January 13, 2009, CMS Open Door Forum Call with providers, CMS made it clear that if physicians do not want to personally handle Medicare enrollment using the online system, their practices must keep using paper enrollment.

The new enrollment rules tell physicians not to share their username and password for the National Plan and Provider Enumeration System (NPPES) with their own staff, and a provider's NPPES username and password are used to sign into PECOS. CMS is pushing the provider-only rule for anti-fraud and security purposes. According to an MGMA source, CMS feels very strongly about physicians and nonphysician practitioners needing to take responsibility for their own credentialing; this way, providers are forced to read through the forms and understand what they are signing. While online PECOS processing is supposed to be quicker, the signature and supporting documents must be submitted by mail. For more information, go to www.cms.hhs.gov/MedicareProviderSupEnroll/.

AMA asks for moratorium on JC disruptive behavior standard

The AMA, in response to a resolution adopted at the November interim meeting, has asked the Joint Commission (JC) for a moratorium on enforcement of its disruptive physician standards that became effective January 1, 2009. The AMA seeks to give medical staffs more time to develop their own codes of conduct and to assure that appeal mechanisms are in place. Definitional clarity is important to avoid arbitrary actions under the standards. To date, the JC has not responded. Of Iowa's 114 hospitals, 33 are JC accredited (26 acute care, 7 critical access).

Remember to notify Medicare regarding deceased practitioners

The WPS Medicare is reminding medical practices that it is imperative that representatives for deceased providers promptly inform Medicare contractors of the death of their member physicians and non-physician practitioners so their NPIs can be properly deactivated. Representatives should complete an 855I form (available at www.wpsmedicare.com/mac/business/b_enroll_forms.shtml) and submit sections 1A, 13, and 15, along with supporting documentation confirming the provider is deceased, e.g., a death certificate or obituary. Section 15 of the form should be signed by an executor of the provider's estate and the appropriate paperwork indicating proof of death should be submitted to: WPS Medicare Part B, Provider Enrollment, PO Box 8248, Madison, Wisconsin 53708. For additional information and assistance, contact WPS Provider Enrollment at (866) 503-7664.

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