



Affiliated Contractors (ACs) refers to Carriers, DMERCs, and FIs. More extensive information on acronyms can be found on the Centers for Medicare website at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/apps/acronyms/>

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The Front Line—CDC Customer Service Representatives

In the June issue of the CERT newsletter, we posted a brief statement about the improved return rate on medical record requests. Three very broad reasons for the improvement were listed. This article is a more detailed explanation of a major force in the Cert Documentation Contractor (CDC) program.

As the CDC started up their program in the last quarter of 2004, they quickly established their call center staffed by Customer Service Representatives (CSRs). During 2005, as the acquisition of Medical Records transitioned from the Cert Review Contractor (CRC) to the CDC, these staffers were initially trained to call providers to verify phone/fax numbers and addresses plus be available to answer questions about the CERT II program.

With a high volume of calls to be made daily, the CSRs rarely had time to do in depth research to find missing phone/fax numbers and addresses. The Problem

Resolution Office was given the task of doing more extensive research in addition to other duties. However, the volume of providers with missing phone numbers, wrong numbers, and incorrect addresses proved to be so great that the CSRs began to take on more responsibility for finding the needed information. Currently, the CSRs and PROs work together as a team to communicate with providers resulting in a rapid increase in the return of medical records after the initial letters of request.

The CSR's believe in the CERT program because the program cuts down on waste and fraud in Medicare; each CSR is committed to doing what it takes to locate the records and to help CMS lower the paid error rate. The CSRs developed a specific set of steps to follow when trying to locate the documents. All too often the process is quite time consuming but when the steps are followed 90% of the searches result in finding the requested medical records. Once the correct phone numbers are located for the provider, the search moves to locating medical records. Many times the CSRs have to transfer through multiple departments within a provider to find the location of the needed materials. The search methodology includes contacting the following entities:

1. Medical Records Dept's
2. Billing or Patient Accounts
3. Compliance or Risk Management
4. PRO
5. AC's

The CSRs also discovered the need to be diplomatic but persistent especially when dealing with uncooperative providers or providers who do not understand what the CERT program is. While most providers are cooperative, many question the veracity of the CSRs' calls even suggesting the requests are fraudulent. The CSRs have to be thoroughly knowledgeable about the CERT tasks and able to respond to a wide variety of questions. Here are a few questions/statements from providers with the CSR responses following:

- Providers have said, "Medicare has already paid this claim so why do you need it?" CSR: "This is a random audit of the claim to determine whether providers are submitting the claim correctly and are being paid correctly."
- Providers have said, "We need the bene's signature to release their records" CSR: (after reciting the HIPPA LANGUAGE) "The bene signs the release at the time of enrollment authorizing Medicare to review the necessary documentation for review when claims are filed for payment. After enrollment Medicare does not need any further releases. "
- Providers have even said, "You are not from Medicare. Why are you calling here? I'm going to report you for Fraud" CSR:(after explaining

CERT) "This a federally mandated program and failure to comply can result in the recoup of payment for services rendered, referral to the Medicare fraud investigating department, and/or the loss of your privileges to participate in the Medicare program."

Every CSR knows that he/she has to be prepared to deal with all types of people; many of the people who work for the providers are not aware of the CERT II program so the CSRs become the educators while trying to retrieve information. The CSRs are the front line offense for reducing error rates through the CERT II program; with the help of all the CSRs and their teamwork spirit, CERT II has come a long way in a short time.



To all the CSRs—thank you!

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Medical Records Returned—Mail vs. Fax

During the time period from October 1, 2005 through June 28, 2006, medical record documentation received at CERT CDC by fax outnumbered the returns by mail by 12%. We have emphasized the preference of using fax rather than mail since we began the program. Using fax is more cost effective and more efficient as we have a system in place that automatically scans the fax images into our database in preparation for the nurse reviewers.

Fifty-six percent of the total CID receipts by fax make up 32% from Part A and 68% from Part B. Forty-four percent of the total CID receipts by mail make up 57% from Part A and 43% from Part B.

CID Receipts	Percentage	Part A	Part B
By Fax	56%	32%	68%
By Mail	44%	57%	43%

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CDC Website Focus Group

The CDC Website Focus Group held the first conference call to begin work on improving the effectiveness of the CERT website (<http://www.certprovider.org>). Representatives from the following Affiliated Contractors (ACs) participated in the first conference call:

Trispan Empire BC
Trailblazer BCBS Kansas
NHIC UGS-WLP
Cigna Palmetto GBA
HealthNow

The first CDC Website-Focus Group Meeting compiled the following suggestions as possible improvements to the CERT website.

1. Add the ability for CID status tracking.
2. Show who last updated the provider address record for a provider.
3. Enable ACs to add an address if an address entry does not already exist.
4. Enable ACs to unflag an address entry on the CERT portal.
5. Enable ACs to add a new provider to the system.

The CDC IT department will prioritize the items and implement some of these suggestions so they can be demonstrated during the next conference call. The Website Focus group plans to meet weekly in the beginning and then taper off to bi-weekly and eventually to monthly. Any suggestions or ideas that you would like to have considered by the Website Focus group can be sent via email to Pat@certcdc.com.

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The purpose of the CERT Newsletter is to provide for an exchange of information among the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), the CERT Review Contractor (CRC), the CERT Documentation Contractor (CDC), Affiliated Contractors (ACs) and Providers. The Newsletter is not intended to set CMS policy or replace CMS directives. The newsletter is published monthly by CDC. Archived copies are available on the CERT Website: <http://www.certprovider.org>

Send in questions, suggestions, and/or articles for inclusion in the newsletter to marylou@certcdc.com

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