



Care that Feels Right at Home

Press Release

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American Association for Homecare Seeks to Protect Taxpayer Dollars from Fraud

ARLINGTON, VA, August 25, 2008 ---- The American Association for Homecare has advocated for strengthening effective anti-fraud initiatives for decades because the profession believes in quality care for Medicare beneficiaries and fiscal responsibility within the Medicare program.

Medicare is a vital program that provides valuable services to beneficiaries. Medicare fraud, however, stains the reputation of this critically important program. We believe that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) should work with the industry to identify high risk areas and root out fraud and abuse. AAHomecare is dedicated to working with lawmakers and the agency that oversees the program to strengthen existing anti-fraud policies, including accreditation for durable medical equipment providers.

On July 15, Congress actually enhanced fraud prevention by setting a statutory mandate for accreditation of home medical equipment providers and by closing a loophole that would have allowed non-accredited providers to provide services to Medicare beneficiaries. *The Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008* (MIPPA) mandates a September 30, 2009, deadline for accreditation of all durable medical equipment providers nationwide.

CMS had the opportunity to phase in expedited quality improvements and anti-fraud and abuse techniques through mandatory accreditation in an additional 70 major metropolitan areas but chose to cancel the January, 14, 2009, deadline even though MIPPA did not require termination of this deadline. AAHomecare opposed this decision. Unfortunately, much media attention has confused the delay of the Medicare competitive bidding pricing program with reducing CMS' ability to fight fraud.

“It is disappointing to see news articles continue to link two separate issues — pricing through competitive bidding and fraud prevention. Fraud prevention mechanisms are different than the price setting program delayed by Congress,” said Tyler J. Wilson, president and CEO of AAHomecare. “If the federal government wants to get serious about preventing fraud and preventing theft of taxpayer dollars, it should use tools like accreditation more aggressively and use its ample, existing authority much more effectively.”

The American Association for Homecare continues to fight to keep criminals out of Medicare and believes Congress is doing the same by passing MIPPA.

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Background on MIPPA

In July, the Senate and the House of Representatives enacted MIPPA by overriding the President's veto. Provisions of the law include the following:

- *The Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008* includes improvements to the Medicare competitive bidding program for home medical equipment that will help to ensure that seniors and people with disabilities continue to have access to quality medical equipment and services at home.
- The law saves Medicare billions of dollars in reduced payments for home medical equipment. While the legislation delays the Medicare bidding program, the home medical equipment industry pays for the delay in the form of a 9.5 percent nationwide reimbursement reduction for items and services subject to bidding. This reimbursement cut saves taxpayers the billions of dollars that the flawed program would have saved. So taxpayers win through reduced Medicare spending, and beneficiaries win because they will continue to receive quality care from their local providers.
- The bidding system has been fraught with problems that have confused seniors, threatened severe reductions to care, and unfairly disqualified hundreds of accredited homecare providers. In cities where competitive bidding was implemented, the process befuddled hospital discharge personnel to the point where patients were being forced to stay longer in hospitals while frantic efforts were underway to locate the hospital beds, power wheelchairs, home oxygen equipment, and other equipment and services needed for patients to continue their recovery and therapy in their homes.

For more information, visit the Newsroom at www.aahomecare.org.

The American Association for Homecare represents durable medical equipment providers, manufacturers, and other organizations in the homecare community. Members serve the medical needs of millions of Americans who require oxygen equipment and therapy, mobility assistive technologies, medical supplies, inhalation drug therapy, home infusion, and other medical equipment and services in their homes. The Association's members operate more than 3,000 homecare locations in all 50 states. Visit www.aahomecare.org.