NEWSUSA®

Contract #: 6302
File Name: MedicarePolicy
Client: American Association for Homecare
Production Status: KC edits 6/2; Client edits 6/4

Phone 703/734-6300 • Fax 703/734-6314

THIS IS A DRAFT OF YOUR FEATURE.

Please indicate changes on this sheet and fax back to 703-734-6314 or send an e-mail with specific instructions. Please do not send unmarked edits in Microsoft Word.

TO APPROVE THIS DRAFT FOR PUBLICATION:

- **Review all copy for accuracy.** Give particular attention to proper nouns (especially names and titles), phone numbers, mailing addresses and Web sites.
- **Be advised NewsUSA edits and proofreads in accordance with Associated Press style and recommends clients follow this newspaper standard.** AP style precludes the use of items including: registration marks (®), trademark symbols (™), brand names in all capital letters, underlining, and certain uses of italics, boldface copy, parentheses or quotes. Deviation from this accepted newspaper standard will negatively affect your placements, and thus, NewsUSA reserves the right to pull its placement guarantee at the executive editor's discretion.

By approving this feature, you agree to hold harmless and defend NewsUSA from its content and publication.

**** IF YOUR DRAFT IS MISSING A PHOTO, DO NOT SIGN OFF UNTIL IT HAS BEEN PLACED IN THE STORY.**

If you are *completely satisfied* with this version, sign and return by *fax* to 703-734-6314.

Copy produced by NewsUSA is copyright-free and may be freely used as long as attribution to NewsUSA is made in its byline so usage may be tracked.

X_____

SIGNATURE & DATE
(OK to publish)
Signature anywhere on this draft gives NewsUSA permission to proceed with distribution "as is." Don't sign with edits.

Questions? Contact Genie Burn at 703-462-2041 or gburn@newsusa.com.

HEALTH

Medicare Bidding Plan Will Limit Homecare Services

NewsUSA

(NU) - Medicare bureaucrats are rolling out a program to bring "competitive bidding" to home medical equipment used by Medicare beneficiaries. In theory, this sounds good.

But a growing number of disability and patient groups and members of Congress recognize that this bidding program will reduce access to care. That's because it is designed to reduce the number of homecare providers. The types of equipment and services affected by the bidding program include oxygen therapy, power wheelchairs, and hospital beds used at home.

As designed, the new bidding program under Medicare will systematically eliminate thousands of qualified providers of durable medical equipment and services, driving them out of business and reducing the number of providers that are permitted to compete. Most of these providers are small and mid-sized companies with a long history of serving their local communities.

The bidding program is scheduled to begin in ten metropolitan areas: Charlotte, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Dallas-Ft. Worth, Kansas City, Miami, Orlando, Pittsburgh, Riverside and San Juan.

The bidding program is touted to save money. But a true accounting would need to include the costs of longer hospital stays, more frequent emergency room visits, and more physician visits. Also the impact of failed businesses and lost jobs in the homecare sector must be considered.

Medicare's new bidding system for homecare will limit needed health services.

This bidding program has been fraught with problems and errors since the beginning. Homecare providers who have long served in their communities have been improperly disqualified from participating. In the meantime, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, which oversees Medicare, wants to expand the program to 70 more areas in the near future.

Providers, patient groups, and disability organizations are urging Congress to reevaluate the program and delay it until important questions about access to care, quality of care and fairness can be addressed.

Department of Health and Human Services Secretary, Michael Leavitt, has called for a greater use of home and community based care because "it's not only where people want to be served, but it's radically more efficient."

For more information on Medicare and homecare, visit www.aahomecare.org.

INCHES 0 .5" 1" 1.5" 2" 2.5" 3" 3.5" 4" 4.5" 5" 5.5" 6" 6.5" 7"