



Supporting Quality Health Care Services at Home

Special Alert

August 13, 2002

Educate Congress Now About the 15% Cut – October 1 is Just Around the Corner

WHAT TO DO: AAHomecare urges you to use the month of August, when Congress will be at home, to talk to your two U.S. Senators about the imperative of taking action on the 15 percent home health reimbursement cut, set to go into effect on October 1.

Your Senators need to act to get legislation passed in September. The House of Representatives passed its Medicare bill, the Medicare Modernization and Prescription Drug Act of 2002, in June, eliminating the 15 percent cut, extending the 10 percent rural add on until 2005, and rejecting a home health copayment. The Senate, however, was unable to pass legislation before it left town. Please also keep up contacts with your U.S. Representatives in August, because they will have to vote to approve a compromise version of provider relief legislation. Their job is not done.

WHAT THE SENATE NEEDS TO DO: Your Senators need to work to find a way to pass legislation in September to stop the 15 percent reduction from happening – before it goes into effect on October 1, 2002.

WHY NOW: If Congress acts before October 1, CMS has stated that it can stop the 15 percent cut with a simple Program Memo to the RHHIs. If Congress does not act, retroactively undoing the cut will be much more complicated. Tell your Senators what your home health agency will have to do in anticipation of October 1, and of the likely disruption of fixing the cut after it has already gone into effect. Tell them about the impact on staffing, and whether you will be able to continue to accept the sickest and highest cost patients you are now able to care for.

ACTIONS ON THE 10 PERCENT RURAL ADD ON AND HOME HEALTH COPAYMENT: AAHomecare predicts that there will be only one piece of Medicare legislation signed into law between now and late 2003. It is imperative that the Senate follow the lead of the House of Representatives and **extend the 10 percent rural add on to January 1, 2005.**

Senators need to reject proposals to include a copayment for home health beneficiaries (currently included in the “Tripartisan” bill) in any Medicare legislation they pass. Tell them of the impact a copayment would have on your patients, and the cost and disruption that attempting to collect copayments would have on your agency’s operations.

HOW TO HAVE AN IMPACT:

- Meet with your two Senators in their local offices.
- Invite them to your office and to go on home health visits with your nurses.
- Call their state offices, send E-mails, letters, and organize petitions.

- Attend their town hall meetings.
- Write letters to the editor or op-ed pieces for your local newspapers.
- Call in when your Senators and Representatives are appear on radio and TV programs.
- Involve your nurses, consumers, patients' family members, and your Advisory Board members.

TOOLS:

- PLAN NOW TO COME TO WASHINGTON ON SEPTEMBER 18 TO PARTICIPATE IN AAHOMECARE'S FLY-IN!
- Use the talking points, sample letters, and one page backgrounders which you will find on the AAHomecare home page (www.aahomecare.org) in the "Special 15%, 10%, Copayment" section.
- Located at the bottom of the AAHomecare home page, the user-friendly "Congressional Contacts" section will help you send quick e-mails directly to your Senators and Representatives.
- Send letters and e-mails to the Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle (D-SD), Minority Leader Trent Lott (R-MS), and the Chairman and Ranking Republican on the Senate Finance Committee, Max Baucus (D-MT) and Charles Grassley (R-IA). You can e-mail them through the Capitol Connection Web site or by sending letters to them at: United States Senate, Washington, DC 20510. All Senate and House offices can be reached by phone by calling 202-225-3121.

If AAHomecare can provide you with any further assistance, e-mail Seth Johnson (sethj@aahomecare.org) or Ann Howard (ahoward@aahomecare.org), or call us at 703-836-6263. We can help draft op-ed articles, provide additional talking points, and follow up with your Senator's staff.