National Provider Identifier (NPI)

Frequently Asked Questions

On May 6, 2005, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) announced the availability of obtaining your NPI. (Please visit http://www.cms.hhs.gov/hipaa/hipaa2/npi-provider.pdf for a copy of this letter.) Since this announcement, ValueOptions has received several inquiries as to the use and implementation of the NPI within our system.

Q: What is the NPI?

A: The NPI is a step to promote, improve, and simplify all electronic transactions. Presently, health plans assign an identifying number to each provider with whom they conduct electronic business. Since providers typically work with several health plans, they are likely to have a different identifier number for each plan. The standard Provider Identifier (NPI) will ensure that each provider has one unique identifier to be used in transactions with all health plans.

Q: How will the NPI work?

A: The original, proposed format for the NPI was an eight digit alphanumeric identifier. However, the healthcare industry has widely criticized this format, claiming that major information systems incompatibilities will make it too expensive and difficult to implement. DHHS has now revised its recommendation, stating that the final rule will specify a 10-position numeric identifier with a check digit in the last position to help detect keying errors. The NPI is expected to carry no intelligence; in other words, its characters will not in themselves provide information about the provider. Each healthcare provider will receive just one unique identifier which will remain with the provider throughout its (his/her) life as a provider.

Q: Is it applicable to all healthcare providers?

A: Is applicable to all healthcare providers including but not limited to individual practitioners, dentists, pharmacists and pharmacies, hospitals, nursing homes, and group practices.

Q: Am I required to use a NPI?

A: Yes. The NPI must be used by all providers. A requirement of HIPAA, this identifier is unique to each provider and will be the standard provider number that each provider will be required to use in all electronic health care transactions in 2007 and 2008.

Q: Will ValueOptions accept my NPI?

A: Yes. All clearinghouses and health plans in connection with the electronic transactions that are covered by HIPAA must accept the NPI.
Q: When will ValueOptions begin accepting the NPI?

A: ValueOptions will be compliant with this requirement by May 23, 2007. The NPI will replace all health care provider identifiers that are in use today but not until 2007 and 2008. Most health plans, including Medicare, Medicaid, private health insurance issuers and clearinghouses will be required to accept and use NPI in standard transactions by May 23, 2007. Small health plans have until May 23, 2008.

Q: Will I know when to start using my NPI with ValueOptions?

A: Yes. This information will be announced in The Valued Provider (our provider newsletter) and also posted on our website (www.valueoptions.com). Please be sure to pay special attention to these two communication tools as they are our primary way to reach you and/or your facility.

Q: Will ValueOptions’ still accept my ValueOptions’ Provider Identification number?

A: Once compliant, ValueOptions will only accept your NPI; however, ValueOptions will continue to accept your current Provider identification number for all current electronic transactions as well as paper claims using your current Provider identification number and Vendor number. If you do not know your current Provider or Vendor numbers, please contact our National Provider Line at 800-397-1630, Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. (EST).

Q: Can ValueOptions’ information system handle this implementation?

A: Yes. ValueOptions will update our information systems, administrative processes, reference files and forms in order to ensure continuity between old provider identifiers and the new NPIs. ValueOptions recognizes that the implementation of the NPI will be challenging, not only for ValueOptions, both for the Federal government and the healthcare community in general. The proposed National Provider System does not yet exist, and while enlisting the participation of Federal plans may help lower set-up costs, coordinating an initial nationwide enumeration process and managing the transition from multiple identifiers to a single identifier environment may become complicated.

Q: How do I apply for my NPI?

A: To address the volume of providers for which a NPI must be assigned, CMS encourages all providers to apply early. You can accomplish this in one of three ways:

1. Apply through a web-based application, visit: https://nppes.cms.hhs.gov.

2. Prepare a paper application and send it to The Enumerator (NPI) on behalf of the Secretary, beginning July 1, 2005. The application and address is available at https://nppes.cms.hhs.gov.

3. Contact CMS for a copy of the application or any questions at 800-465-3203 or TTY 800-692-2326.
**Q: How do I find out more about the NPI?**

**A: You can find out more about the NPI by:**

- Visiting the CMS website at [http://www.cms.hhs.gov](http://www.cms.hhs.gov) for general information


- Viewing the NPI Final Rule at [http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/14mar20010800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2004/pdf/04-1149.pdf](http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/14mar20010800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2004/pdf/04-1149.pdf)

- Visiting [http://www.cms.hhs.gov/hipaa/hipaa2](http://www.cms.hhs.gov/hipaa/hipaa2) for the latest information regarding the NPI, including a transcript from CMS' recent National Provider Identifier Roundtable conference call.
