

DAKOTACARE Update:

Compliance

Physicians are often thrown into the flurry of rules, regulations and “legal-eze” of health care when their true calling is the practice of medicine. With the addition of a Medicare plan to the book of business at DAKOTACARE, the DAKOTACARE Board has had to focus on Medicare compliance and what activities are required based on the added monitoring requirements.

Like most health care organizations, DAKOTACARE is dealing with an ever-changing set of laws and regulations. Regulatory compliance and strategic business decision-making imperatives have made it key to establish a set of guidelines to help coordinate company-wide efforts.

Fundamentally, compliance efforts are a sound business investment. They are designed to establish a culture within an organization that promotes prevention, detection and resolution of instances of conduct that do not conform to federal or state laws and federal health care program requirements, as well as the organization’s ethical and business policies. In practice, a compliance program should effectively articulate and demonstrate the organization’s commitment to legal and ethical conduct.

DAKOTACARE believes an effective compliance program provides a mechanism which brings the public and private sectors together to reach mutual goals of reducing fraud and abuse, improving operational quality, and ensuring the provision of high-quality, cost-effective care.

A Medicare organization gains numerous additional benefits by implementing an effective compliance program that includes the following:

- The formulation of effective internal controls to assure compliance with federal regulations and internal guidelines;
- Demonstrates a strong commitment to honest and responsible corporate conduct;
- Improved (clinical and non-clinical) quality of care and service; and
- A centralized source for distributing information on health care statutes, regulations and other program directives related to fraud and abuse.

Compliance-Related Activities for 2008

DAKOTACARE will implement several efforts surrounding compliance throughout 2008. These will include NCQA Accreditation preparation and updating HIPAA compliance documentation and education.

National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA)

DAKOTACARE has a strategic initiative to prepare for NCQA accreditation. Several preparation activities will be occurring throughout 2008 and will require assistance from our physician network. One of these activities will be focused on timely re-credentialing. Re-credentialing will be occurring on a three-year basis and will be based on the most current NCQA Accreditation Standards. Additional information will be forwarded in the next several months which will delineate the new processes which will follow the NCQA Standards and Guidelines.

Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set (HEDIS)

HEDIS is a tool used by more than 90 percent of America’s health plans to measure performance on important dimensions of care and service. It is a standardized set of measures which are required for quality monitoring for both Medicare and for NCQA Accreditation.

HEDIS consists of 71 measures across eight domains of care. Because so many plans collect HEDIS data and the measures are so specifically defined, HEDIS makes it possible to compare the performance of health plans on an “apples-to-apples” basis. Health plans also use HEDIS results to see where they need to focus their improvement efforts.

Examples of these measures are the mammography screening rate, diabetic A1c levels and the immunization rates in children. They also closely reflect the voluntary Physician Quality Reporting Initiative (PQRI) measures proposed by CMS and the use of the CPT II Codes.

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA)

HIPAA compliance is sometimes a frustrating work in progress. Almost 12 years after HIPAA became federal law, it continues to change. The most recent change is the ability to process claims and other electronic transactions using standardized ID numbers for doctors and hospitals. This effort to ready the systems has been greatly assisted with the cooperation of all health care providers adopting the new NPI numbers.

If you have any questions regarding compliance efforts at DAKOTACARE, please contact us.

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