



Wednesday in Washington, April 26, 2006

American Association for Homecare

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CMS Releases Proposed Competitive Bidding Rule; AAHomecare Begins Work on Comments

On Monday, CMS issued the notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) for competitive bidding. The proposed rule addresses some key aspects of competitive bidding implementation, but many issues--such as the products and metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) subject to competitive bidding--will be determined at a future date. AAHomecare's brief summary highlighting key proposals, as well as documents including the proposed rule and the CMS press release and background information, are available on the front page of the AAHomecare Web site, www.aahomecare.org. AAHomecare's staff, councils, and committees will be working to respond to the proposals in the NPRM in the coming weeks, and we will keep you informed of that process. In the meantime, it's important to keep up the momentum on cosponsors for H.R. 3559, the Hobson-Tanner bill.

Oxygen Alert: Please Urge Congress to Repeal DRA Oxygen Provisions

AAHomecare expects the proposed 13-month cap on oxygen issue to be a very real threat throughout the year - especially toward the end of this session of Congress as House leaders look for ways to cut spending in Medicare. To focus attention on the broader oxygen issue, we urge Congress to repeal the provision in the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (DRA) that put medical oxygen in the rent-to-purchase category. AAHomecare has four pieces of literature to help get the word out: talking points, a position summary, a sample letter from providers to Congress, and sample letter to oxygen beneficiaries. See www.aahomecare.org for details.

AAHomecare Sends Letter to CMS Detailing Concerns about Oxygen Implementation

AAHomecare sent a detailed letter to CMS regarding specific questions and concerns about implementation of the oxygen provisions of DRA. This can be useful in ongoing advocacy efforts with Congress. See the front page of the web site, www.aahomecare.org to access the letter and appendix.

New HHABNs Effective June 1; CMS Responds to HHAs' Questions

As of June 1, home health agencies must use the new Home Health Advance Beneficiary Notice upon termination of both covered and non-covered care to beneficiaries. The HHABN forms and instructions are available through this link to CMS's website: http://www.cms.hhs.gov/BNI/03_HHABN.asp#TopOfPage

Note the 6th bullet, through which you will find 25 frequently asked questions and answers. In addition to the Q&As on the HHABN website, CMS has responded to a number of others issues sent by AAHomecare. To view these responses, go to: <http://www.aahomecare.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=249>

AAHomecare has several other questions pending at CMS. We are aware that a number of you have additional concerns. Please E-mail them to Ann Howard (ahoward@aahomecare.org) and we will forward them to CMS for their response.

Senators, Seeking to Prevent Another Home Health Freeze, Need Republican Senators' Support

Senator Susan Collins (R-ME), along with Senators Feingold, Bond, and Reed, is soliciting signatures for a letter to Senators Charles Grassley (R-IA) and Max Baucus (D-MT), the chairman and ranking member, respectively, of the Senate Finance Committee, urging them to oppose another home health market basket freeze in 2007, as both MedPAC and the President have proposed. Senator Collins plans to send the letter as soon as a majority of U.S. Senators have signed on. Signatories thus far include 5 Republicans and 17 Democrats, as follows:

Republicans: Collins, Bond, Hatch, Roberts, Talent

Democrats: Feingold, Reed, Murray, Levin, Jeffords, Menendez, Clinton, Lincoln, Schumer, Wyden, Landrieu, Salazar, Stabenow, Dayton, Cantwell, Lautenberg, Kennedy

The sponsors of the letter are seeking much more balance between Republicans and Democrats, especially since the GOP controls the Senate. AAHomecare urges you to contact your two U.S. Senators if they are not signed on, making your greatest efforts with Republicans. If they have already signed, be sure to thank them.

To view the Collins-Feingold Dear Colleague letter, go to:

<http://www.aahomecare.org/associations/3208/files/CollinsFeingoldDearColleagueApril2006.pdf>

To see the letter to Senate Finance Committee leadership, click on:

<http://www.aahomecare.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=250>

Mark Calendars for Key Homecare Events: Leadership, Heartland, Legislative Fly-In

Mark your calendars for the AAHomecare **Leadership Conference, May 7-9, 2006 in St. Petersburg, FL**. Among the keynote speakers is Michael Sheehan, the nation's leading expert on message development for political and advocacy campaigns.

VGM's **Heartland Conference in Waterloo, Iowa, June 12-15, 2006** is a three-day educational conference that offers VGM members the opportunity to further their knowledge, learn what's new in the industry, earn CEUs, visit with VGM Participating Vendors, and network with other members.

www.heartland2006.com

The AAHomecare **Washington Legislative Fly-In will be held June 19-20, 2006**. This is the key advocacy event for homecare and provides an opportunity to join with your colleagues to meet and lobby members of Congress and their staffs about issues that are critical to your organization. The event will include a Home Oxygen Patient and Technology Fair on Capitol Hill June 20 to allow members of Congress and their staffs to meet both patients and providers. Please register for these events today. See www.aahomecare.org.



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