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**NATIONAL PROVIDER
IDENTIFIER**

MAY 2005

The CMS Administrator has urged covered entities to apply for a National Provider Identifier (“NPI”) beginning on May 23, 2005. An NPI is a new identifier to be used in standard electronic health care transactions which include claims, eligibility inquiries and responses, claim status inquiries and responses, referrals, and remittance advices. Once the standards are all in place, health care providers will be able to submit transactions to any health plan in the United States. The goal is to make electronic data interchange a viable and preferable alternative to paper processing for health care providers and health plans. The NPI will replace health care provider identifiers that are currently used by health care providers in standard transactions.

Covered entities should carefully safeguard their NPIs and should not begin using NPIs in standard transactions until health plans have issued specific instructions on accepting NPIs.

Most health plans, including Medicare, Medicaid, and private health insurance issuers, and all health care clearinghouses must accept and use NPIs in all standard transactions by May 23, 2007. Small health plans must accept and use NPIs by May 23, 2008. NPIs can be applied for in one of three ways:

- Apply online beginning May 23, 2005 at <https://nppes.cms.hhs.gov>
- Prepare and send a paper application beginning July 1, 2005 (applications can be gotten online at <https://nppes.cms.hhs.gov> or by calling the Enumerator at 800-465-3203)
- Beginning in the fall of 2005, an organization, with the health care provider’s permission, may submit the health care provider’s application in an electronic file.