



Texas Health Care Information Council

4900 North Lamar, Room 3407 Austin, Texas 78751-2399 (512) 424-6492 (512) 424-6491 (fax)

Visit our Web site at <http://www.thcic.state.tx.us>

March 10, 1999

TO: Chief Executive Officers of Texas Hospitals

FROM: Jim Loyd, Executive Director

THCIC Hospital Numbered Letter - Volume 2 Number 3.

1Corrections Files Mis-addressed

2Revised Deadline for Second and Third Quarter Data Corrections of 1998

3Health Care Provider Access to Certification Files

4Problems with Modem Download Speed

5Certification File and Software on CD-ROM

6Changes to Contact or Certifying Personnel

1Corrections Files Mis-addressed

Last week THCIC was notified by two hospitals that they have received claims correction files that do not belong to them. We believe the problem to be very limited but it is important that any mis-addressed data be located and returned to THCIC immediately. Please verify that all data files received by your facility belong to you.

Please verify that all data files received by your facility belong to you. Review the label on the diskette. All data diskettes are labeled with the THCIC Provider #, the primary contact persons name, hospital name and address. Text documents that are unzipped from the executable file have the THCIC number and the hospital name. Review the hard copy documents. Your THCIC Provider # and the hospital name and address are at the top of the documents.

The error is the result of a mix-up using the THCIC numbers in addressing packages being mailed to hospitals. Steps have been taken to ensure that the mistake will not recur. An additional person has been assigned to verify the THCIC number, the hospital name and the address on the package prior to sending out claims in error. Diskettes and hardcopy data will **now** be sent by traceable means.

THCIC apologizes for this mistake. Getting information out to hospitals as quickly as possible is an important priority, however, the security of hospital data is a more important priority. The data collection system is designed to protect patient records, and we cannot relax our vigilance in any step in the process.

Hospitals can assist in ensuring that THCIC can correctly identify their data by consistently providing the EIN, Medicare number (acute care, if appropriate), facility name and address on the 10 record for all data submitted to THCIC. Electronic download is the fastest and most secure means of obtaining your status reports and data files.

2 Revised Deadline for Second and Third Quarter Data Corrections of 1998

The data corrections process is undergoing birthing pains. Although almost all claims files were processed through the THCIC edits early in February, some of the claims error files were not sent out until last week. **Hospitals will be given six (6) weeks from the time that they receive their claims with errors to make corrections and return the corrected information.** If you have received 2nd Quarter data reports and errors and have not received your 3rd Quarter data reports and errors you will have six weeks from the time you are notified of 3rd Quarter's data.

In the last Hospital Numbered Letter (Volume 2 Number 2), we indicated that corrections are due by March 21, 1999. This is correct if you were notified and received your hospitals claims with errors on or before February 5. If you received data after February 5 you have six (6) weeks to returned your corrected data. We would appreciate your completing corrections as quickly as possible.

Corrections that are submitted after the certification file has been created, will be published in the year end Public Use Data File (PUDF). At this time of development there is no procedure or time allotment in place to make corrections to the Certification file before it is released to the public. We are in the process of making this available.

3 Health Care Provider Access to Certification Files

Texas Health and Safety Code Chapter 108 requires that hospitals provide an opportunity for physicians and other health care providers to review the claims that will become part of the public use data file for patients they treated. THCIC will provide a certification file to hospitals that will contain discharge encounters. Hospitals are

free to choose how they provide access to the certification data to health care providers. The certification browser will allow the user to sort data by the attending and other physician fields. Once files are sorted they can then be printed and separated according to physician. There has been some discussion as to whether summaries for health care providers by DRG or other field would be useful. If you have suggestions or further questions about this topic, please contact us.

4 Problems with Modem Download Speed

THCICHelp has received several calls about problems with slow electronic downloads. It is not uncommon that line quality effects either the connect speed or the number of errors encountered during the downloading of files. This is more common over long distance lines than you would experience locally. If you see that you are connected at a low baud rate, hang up and attempt to connect again. Even though Commonwealth has 56K modems, it will be unusual that you will experience rates higher the 28.8 kbps. The rates vary but you should be able to connect at 20.0 bps or higher. If you are connected and downloading a file and notice that the number of retries is high you may want to interrupt the download, disconnect and try again. A new connection may route your call through better lines.

Commonwealth is working on this problem with a couple of hospitals. They may have found a solution using a shareware (free or inexpensive) terminal emulation program that, in preliminary tests, seems to experience fewer transmission errors than the Windows 95 Hyperterminal. If you are experiencing problems with downloading files contact THCICHelp.

Correction:

In the last Hospital Numbered Letter we gave an incorrect number for our fax. The correct fax number for the Council office is (512) 424-6491.

5 Certification File and Software on CD-ROM

Commonwealth has indicated to THCIC that they believe that it will be more efficient use of time and resources to use CD-ROM for distribution of quarter certification files and software. The size of claims files for most hospitals will be large enough to require several diskettes. An entire quarter's of discharge encounters for most hospitals will require a substantial allotment of hard disk space for certification analysis. Using a CD-ROM will eliminate the need for this allotment when the certification software is used for reviewing the encounters. If a hospital chooses to utilize a database management or statistical package to analyze the data, it will be necessary to reserve disk space as required by that product.

If you do not have a CD-ROM drive, it is recommended that you obtain one. It will be possible to send data on diskettes but it is not recommended.

6 Changes to Contact or Certifying Personnel

The Council has received numerous requests to change the hospital's contact personnel or certifying agent (CEO/Administrator or their designee). When a hospital needs to change any of the following personnel: **primary contact person, alternative contact person** or **certifying agent** the previous contact person or the CEO/Administrator should send a written statement notifying THCIC of the changes. The letter should be on hospital letterhead and may be mailed or faxed.