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Mark D. Birdwhistell
Secretary

Dear First Steps Provider:

Health Plans assign identification numbers to their providers of health care services and suppliers. A health plan may be, among other things, a Federal program such as Medicare, a state Medicaid program, or a private health plan. The identifiers the health plan assigns are frequently not standardized within a single health plan or across health plans, which results in the single health care provider having different identification (provider) numbers for each health plan and often having multiple billing numbers issued within the same health plan. This complicates the health care provider's claims submission process. As a result, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) have developed a health care provider identification system that will be used nationally to uniquely identify all health care providers.

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) mandated the adoption of standard unique identifiers for health care providers, as well as the adoption of standard unique identifiers for health plans. The purpose of these provisions is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the electronic transmission of health information.

CMS has developed the National Provider Identifier (NPI) which will be the standard unique identifier for each health care provider. The NPI is based on information collected by CMS and will be unique to you and follow you through your career as a health care professional. A health care provider is defined as "any person or organization that furnishes, bills, or is paid for health care in the normal course of business." Individual health care providers who are members or employees of an organization who provides health care services are not considered "subparts" of those organizations. Individual health care providers are legal entities in their own right.

As such, First Steps is alerting you, as a health care professional billing for health care services, to the necessity of obtaining a National Provider Identifier (NPI). CMS has developed the National Plan and Provider Enumerator System (NPPES) to assign these unique identifiers. We are providing you with the links to assist you in the process of obtaining your NPI free of charge. **NOTE: The deadline for implementing use of your NPI is May 23, 2007.**

For background information: http://www.cms.hhs.gov/apps/npi/01_overview.asp

For instructions and an application:

<http://nppes.cms.hhs.gov/NPPES/StaticForward.do?forward=static.npistart>

For application help:

<http://nppes.cms.hhs.gov/NPPES/Help.do?topic=ContactInformation>

For help with getting started: <https://nppes.cms.hhs.gov/NPPES/Welcome.do>

For a paper application:

<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/NationalProvIdentStand/Downloads/NPIapplication.pdf>

For educational resources:

http://www.cms.hhs.gov/NationalProvIdentStand/04_education.asp#TopOfPage

Upon obtaining your NPI please make sure to send it to Jackie Neal, First Steps, 275 East Main St., HS2WC, Frankfort, KY 40621. It is possible that a few disciplines *may* not be required to obtain a NPI. If you apply and receive a denial letter, please forward this to Jackie Neal as well. We will require some type of documentation from each provider regarding the acquisition or denial of the NPI.

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*CMS has also developed a new version of the CMS 1500 Claim Form that will be used to accommodate the new NPI. The CMS 1500 Claim Form (8/05) is used to transmit standardized data claims for billing and may be used by health care professionals starting October 1, 2006. If you would like more information about the CMS 1500 Claim Form and how to use it for billing purposes, please see the following websites:*

<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNMattersArticles/downloads/MM5060.pdf>

<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/transmittals/downloads/R1010CP.pdf>

**(beginning with page 11 guidance is offered for completion of the form)**

[http://www.cms.hhs.gov/ElectronicBillingEDITrans/16\\_1500.asp#TopOfPage](http://www.cms.hhs.gov/ElectronicBillingEDITrans/16_1500.asp#TopOfPage)

<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNMattersArticles/downloads/MM4293.pdf>

<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/Transmittals/downloads/R899CP.pdf>

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We will be sending updates over the next few months which will provide additional information regarding the NPI and CMS 1500 Claim Form (8/05). If you have questions about either feel free to contact First Steps Central Office at 502-564-3756 ext. 4589.

Sincerely,
Angie D. Lawrence
Financial Administrator