Phase I CORE 157: Eligibility and Benefits System Availability Rule
version 1.1.0 March 2011

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BACKGROUND

Many healthcare providers have a need to determine an individual's health plan coverage at the time and point of patient registration and intake, which may occur on a 24x7x365 basis or outside of the typical business day and business hours. Additionally, many institutional providers are now allocating staff resources to performing patient pre-registration activities on weekends and evenings. As a result, providers have a business need to be able to conduct health plan eligibility transactions at any time.

On the other hand, health plans have a business need to take their eligibility and other systems offline periodically in order to perform the required system maintenance. This typically results in some systems not being available for timely eligibility inquiries and responses certain nights and weekends. The rule was created to address these conflicting needs.

RULE

Section 1: System Availability Requirements

System availability[1] must be no less than 86 percent per calendar week[2] for both real time and batch processing modes. This will allow for health plan, (or other information source) clearinghouse/switch or other intermediary system updates to take place within a maximum of 24 hours per calendar week for regularly scheduled downtime.

Section 2: Reporting Requirements

Subsection 2.1: Scheduled Downtime

CORE-certified health plans (or information sources), clearinghouses/switches or other intermediaries must publish their regularly scheduled system downtime in an appropriate manner (e.g., on websites or in companion guides) such that the healthcare provider can determine the health plan's system availability and staffing levels can be effectively managed.

Subsection 2.2: Non-Routine Downtime

For non-routine downtime (e.g., system upgrade), an information source must publish the schedule of non-routine downtime at least one week in advance.

Subsection 2.3: Unscheduled Downtime

For unscheduled/emergency downtime (e.g., system crash), an information source will be required to provide information within one hour of realizing downtime will be needed.

Subsection 2.4: No Response Required

No response is required during scheduled downtime(s).

Section 3: Holiday Schedule

Each health plan, (or other information source) clearinghouse/switch or other intermediary will establish its own holiday schedule and publish it in accordance with the rule above.

CONFORMANCE

Each CORE-certified entity must demonstrate its conformance with this system availability rule by publishing the following documentation:

1. *Actual published copies of regularly scheduled downtime schedule, including holidays, and method(s) of publishing*

2. *Sample of non-routine downtime notice and method(s) of publishing*

3. *Sample of unscheduled/emergency downtime notice and method(s) of publishing*

Conformance with this rule must be demonstrated through successful completion of the approved CORE test suite for this rule with a CORE-authorized testing vendor.

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[1] System is defined as all necessary components required to process a v5010 270 inquiry and return a response.
[2] Calendar week is defined as 12:01am Sunday to 12:00am the following Sunday.