

II. IMPLEMENTING THE NATIONAL PROVIDER IDENTIFIER

NPI: A Look at the Basics and the Future



Challenge

Collecting NPIs from providers to integrate into legacy systems

"Many providers have their NPI but aren't yet using it. The message needs to be: We need your NPI so you can get paid."

—Christopher VanAntwerp
Manager, Provider Enrollment & Data Management
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan

Summary

The National Provider Identifier (NPI) is a unique, standard identifier issued by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and mandated by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA). It is intended to replace all legacy identifiers and last for life. All providers are required to start using their NPI by May 2007. NPI implementation will change all aspects of health care but will give health plans an especially heavy load to bear. The first hurdle in this major change is for health plans to obtain providers' NPIs. BCBSM took the plunge by encouraging providers to get their numbers and by gearing up a system to handle the NPIs. Universal Credentialing Datasource® (UCD) was an essential part of this system, giving providers a single point at which to enter an NPI. The health plan's use of the UCD is putting it ahead of the game in NPI collection, as well as giving it access to additional data.

Best Practice Solution

Encourage providers to submit NPI data through the UCD; use a monthly UCD custom extract to create a manual data entry crosswalk of one NPI and one legacy PIN

Initial plans and anticipated challenges

- ▶ The health plan would need staffing to handle loading up to 60,000 NPIs
- ▶ Assumption is 20 percent of providers would be late submitters
- ▶ NPIs must be coordinated with legacy systems
- ▶ NPIs lack any embedded intelligence to make coordination easier
- ▶ Validation will present new difficulties until CMS publishes a directory listing all provider NPIs

Recommended: Take the plunge now

- ▶ Health plans should commence NPI collection
- ▶ Encourage providers to apply for NPIs
- ▶ Encourage providers to submit NPI on their CAQH applications
- ▶ Build a crosswalk to legacy system
- ▶ Encourage providers to submit NPI to health plans

Results

- ▶ UCD is driving collection of NPIs
- ▶ Health plan is ahead in preparations even as key questions on overall NPI implementation continue
- ▶ Using the UCD in collection process is making changeover more efficient and is anticipated to reduce provider challenges during changeover

Key Takeaways

- ▶ Health plans should begin the call for NPIs even if there is no immediate processing system in place
- ▶ Prepare to analyze and solve trouble spots as they arise
- ▶ Begin analyzing staffing needs now
- ▶ Explore the role of the UCD in the solution