



FLEX Update

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Rural Health Dialogue, Call for Presentations, CMS Postpones HIPAA, Information Links

In this issue of FLEX Update we will provide important reminders to attend the Rural Health Dialogue and to submit your presentation proposals for the 2004 Annual Dakota Conference on Rural and Public Health. Additionally, CMS announces HIPAA postponement and informational links are provided for new information related to Medicare Eligibility and Ambulance Services.

Rural Health Dialogue

*If you have not yet replied to participate in a **Rural Health Dialogue** please review the following and consider attending. The Center for Rural Health, UND School of Medicine and Health Sciences invites health care and human service providers, local press and state legislators to participate in the Rural Health Dialogues. Hospital administrators are encouraged to bring members of their Board of Directors and senior staff from their facility. It is hoped that these dialogues will increase people's familiarity with the services and information that the Center for Rural Health has and that may be useful to them. The Center for Rural Health is also hoping to learn first-hand about issues that concern participants and consider how it can more effectively align its efforts to collectively strengthen health care for rural North Dakotans.*

Meals are provided and space is limited. The following dates and locations are provided for your review. RSVPs may be sent to The Center for Rural Health, PO Box 9037, Grand Forks, ND 58202-9037, by calling Sue Applegren at (701) 777-4287, or by e-mailing sapplegren@medicine.nodak.edu. Please feel free to contact Marlene Miller or Brad Gibbens should you have any questions (777-3848).



Schedule of Rural Health Dialogues

Tuesday, October 7	Hazen	11am – 1pm (MST)	City Hall (Small Hall)
Tuesday, October 7	Dickinson	5pm – 7pm (MST)	Hospitality Inn Colt/Springfield Room
Wednesday, October 8	Williston	11am – 1pm (CDT)	Williston State College Creighton Building, Rm 19
Tuesday, October 14	Lisbon	11am – 1pm (CDT)	Stake-Out Restaurant
Tuesday, October 14	Ashley	4:30pm – 6:30pm (CDT)	Dakota Family Restaurant
Tuesday, October 28	Langdon	11am – 1pm (CDT)	Stables Supper Club
Tuesday, October 28	Cooperstown	5pm – 7pm (CDT)	Cooperstown Medical Center, Dining Room
Monday, November 17	Rugby	5:30-7:30pm (CDT)	Heart of America Medical Center, Fox Auditorium

Call for Presentations

2004 Annual Dakota Conference on Rural and Public Health (March 24-26, 2004)

Public health professionals, rural healthcare providers, healthcare researchers/educators and other healthcare professionals are invited to submit ideas for presentations. This year's conference theme is *“Building a Healthy North Dakota, One Community at a Time.”* The Dakota Conference is an interdisciplinary forum for sharing strategies for building and sustaining healthy communities in North Dakota.

Presentations should feature innovative ideas, research or model community programs that can be replicated with an emphasis on developing coalitions and partnerships to build healthy communities. **To submit your proposal online**, visit http://medicine.nodak.edu/crh/sorh/dakconf/rfp_horm.html or contact Lynette at (701) 777-6049 to receive the form by mail, email or fax. Presenters receive a discounted conference registration rate.

CMS Postpones HIPAA Transaction and Code Set Compliance Deadline

Tuesday, September 23, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued a memorandum announcing that Medicare would continue for a limited time beyond the October 15 deadline to accept current electronic transaction formats. CMS states the contingency plan for postponement was implemented to prevent any disruption in payments to providers. The American Ambulance Association (AAA) along with other Medicare provider organizations sent letters to CMS strongly urging the agency to implement the contingency plan.

The memorandum issued by CMS can be accessed on the CMS website at <http://cms.hhs.gov>.



Information Links

“Medicare: Modest Eligibility Expansion for Critical Access Hospital Program Should Be Considered.” The US General Accounting Office has released a report titled “Medicare: Modest Eligibility Expansion for Critical Access Hospital Program Should Be Considered.” The report deals with small hospitals with Distinctive Part Units primarily. A copy of the report can be accessed: <http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-948> (full report), or <http://www.gao.gov/highlights/d03948high.pdf> (highlights).

The GAO makes the following recommendation to Congress in the report:

“We suggest that the Congress may wish to consider allowing hospitals with DPUs to convert to CAH status while making allowances for DPU beds, patients, and lengths-of-stay when determining CAH eligibility, and that CAH-affiliated DPUs be paid under the same formulas as other inpatient psychiatric or rehabilitation providers. We also suggest that the Congress may wish to consider changing the CAH limit on acute care patient census from an absolute limit of 15 acute care patients to an annual average of 15 to give CAHs greater flexibility in the management of their patient census.”

“Ambulance Services: Medicare Payments Can Be Better Targeted to Less Densely Population Rural Areas.” A report on Medicare Ambulance reimbursement in rural areas, titled “Ambulance Services: Medicare Payments Can Be Better Targeted to Less Densely Population Rural Areas” can be accessed:

<http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-986> (full report) or
<http://www.gao.gov/highlights/d03986high.pdf> (highlights).

Flex Program Tracking Project: Year Three Report (February, 2003)

The Flex Program Tracking Project’s Year Three Report is available on the Technical Assistance and Services Center (TASC) website: <http://www.ruralresource.org/index.shtml>

PowerPoint Presentation from NDHA

Brad Gibbens presented the **“Rural Hospital Flexibility Program Update”** on September 12, 2003 at the North Dakota Healthcare Association’s Annual Convention. The PowerPoint presentation contains information on Year 5 Flex Grants that may be useful to you in your submission of a proposal this year. A copy of this PowerPoint presentation is now available on the Center for Rural Health, UND School of Medicine and Health Sciences website: <http://medicine.nodak.edu/crh/presentations>).

Please contact Marlene Miller or Brad Gibbens with your FLEX questions.

