

referenced above, access CMS' Web Site address at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/PaperworkReductionActof1995>, or E-mail your request, including your address, phone number, OMB number, and CMS document identifier, to [Paperwork@cms.hhs.gov](mailto:Paperwork@cms.hhs.gov), or call the Reports Clearance Office on (410) 786-1326.

To be assured consideration, comments and recommendations for the proposed information collections must be received at the address below, no later than 5 p.m. on December 26, 2007: CMS, Office of Strategic Operations and Regulatory Affairs, Division of Regulations Development—C, Attention: Bonnie L Harkless, Room C4-26-05, 7500 Security Boulevard, Baltimore, Maryland 21244-1850.

Dated: October 19, 2007.

**Michelle Shortt,**

*Director, Regulations Development Group, Office of Strategic Operations and Regulatory Affairs.*

[FR Doc. E7-21123 Filed 10-25-07; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4120-01-P

## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

### Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

[CMS-2276-PN]

#### Medicare and Medicaid Programs; Application by the Community Health Accreditation Program for Continued Deeming Authority for Home Health Agencies

**AGENCY:** Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, HHS.

**ACTION:** Proposed notice.

**SUMMARY:** This proposed notice with comment period acknowledges the receipt of a deeming application from the Community Health Accreditation Program for continued recognition as a national accrediting organization for home health agencies that wish to participate in the Medicare or Medicaid programs. Section 1865(b)(3)(A) of the Social Security Act requires that within 60 days of receipt of an organization's complete application, we publish a notice that identifies the national accrediting body making the request, describes the nature of the request, and provides at least a 30-day public comment period.

**DATES:** To be assured consideration, comments must be received at one of the addresses provided below, no later than 5 p.m. on November 26, 2007.

**ADDRESSES:** In commenting, please refer to file code CMS-2276-PN. Because of staff and resource limitations, we cannot accept comments by facsimile (FAX) transmission. You may submit comments in one of four ways (no duplicates, please):

1. *Electronically.* You may submit electronic comments on specific issues in this regulation to <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/eRulemaking>. Click on the link "Submit electronic comments on CMS regulations with an open comment period." (Attachments should be in Microsoft Word, WordPerfect, or Excel; however, we prefer Microsoft Word.)

2. *By regular mail.* You may mail written comments (one original and two copies) to the following address ONLY: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Department of Health and Human Services, Attention: CMS-2276-PN, P.O. Box 8010, Baltimore, MD 21244-8010.

Please allow sufficient time for mailed comments to be received before the close of the comment period.

3. *By express or overnight mail.* You may send written comments (one original and two copies) to the following address ONLY: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Department of Health and Human Services, Attention: CMS-2276-PN, Mail Stop C4-26-05, 7500 Security Boulevard, Baltimore, MD 21244-1850.

4. *By hand or courier.* If you prefer, you may deliver (by hand or courier) your written comments (one original and two copies) before the close of the comment period to one of the following addresses. If you intend to deliver your comments to the Baltimore address, please call telephone number (410) 786-9994 in advance to schedule your arrival with one of our staff members. Room 445-G, Hubert H. Humphrey Building, 200 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20201; or 7500 Security Boulevard, Baltimore, MD 21244-1850.

(Because access to the interior of the HHH Building is not readily available to persons without Federal Government identification, commenters are encouraged to leave their comments in the CMS drop slots located in the main lobby of the building. A stamp-in clock is available for persons wishing to retain a proof of filing by stamping in and retaining an extra copy of the comments being filed.)

Comments mailed to the addresses indicated as appropriate for hand or courier delivery may be delayed and received after the comment period.

For information on viewing public comments, see the beginning of the **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Cindy Melanson, (410) 786-0310. Patricia Chmielewski, (410) 786-6899.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

*Submitting Comments:* We welcome comments from the public on all issues set forth in this proposed notice to assist us in fully considering issues and developing policies. You can assist us by referencing the file code CMS-2276-PN and the specific "issue identifier" that precedes the section on which you choose to comment.

*Inspection of Public Comments:* All comments received before the close of the comment period are available for viewing by the public, including any personally identifiable or confidential business information that is included in a comment. We post all comments received before the close of the comment period on the following Web site as soon as possible after they have been received: <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/eRulemaking>. Click on the link "Electronic Comments on CMS Regulations" on that Web site to view public comments.

Comments received timely will also be available for public inspection as they are received, generally beginning approximately 3 weeks after publication of a document, at the headquarters of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, 7500 Security Boulevard, Baltimore, Maryland 21244, Monday through Friday of each week from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. To schedule an appointment to view public comments, phone 1-800-743-3951.

#### I. Background

Under the Medicare program, eligible beneficiaries may receive covered services from a home health agency (HHA) provided certain requirements are met. Sections 1861(m) and (o), and 1891 of the Social Security Act (the Act) establish distinct criteria for facilities seeking designation as an HHA. Regulations concerning provider agreements are at 42 CFR part 489 and those pertaining to activities relating to the survey and certification of facilities are at 42 CFR part 488. The regulations at 42 CFR part 484 specify the conditions that an HHA must meet in order to participate in the Medicare program, the scope of covered services and the conditions for Medicare payment for Home Health Care.

Generally, in order to enter into a provider agreement with the Medicare program, an HHA must first be certified by a State survey agency as complying

with the conditions or requirements set forth in part 484 of our CMS regulations. Thereafter, the HHA is subject to regular surveys by a State survey agency to determine whether it continues to meet these requirements. There is an alternative, however, to surveys by State agencies.

Section 1865(b)(1) of the Act provides that, if a provider entity demonstrates through accreditation by an approved national accrediting organization that all applicable Medicare conditions are met or exceeded, we will deem those provider entities as having met the requirements. Accreditation by an accrediting organization is voluntary and is not required for Medicare participation.

If an accrediting organization is recognized by the Secretary as having standards for accreditation that meet or exceed Medicare requirements, any provider entity accredited by the national accrediting body's approved program would be deemed to meet the Medicare conditions. A national accrediting organization applying for deeming authority under part 488, subpart A must provide us with reasonable assurance that the accrediting organization requires the accredited provider entities to meet requirements that are at least as stringent as the Medicare conditions. Our regulations concerning the reapproval of accrediting organizations are set forth at §§ 488.4 and 488.8(d)(3). The regulations at § 488.8(d)(3) require accrediting organizations to reapply for continued deeming authority every six years or sooner as determined by us.

Community Health Accreditation Program's (CHAP's) term of approval as a recognized accreditation program for HHA's expires March 31, 2008.

## II. Approval of Deeming Organizations

Section 1865(b)(2) of the Act and our regulations at § 488.8(a) require that our findings concerning review and reapproval of a national accrediting organization's requirements consider, among other factors, the applying accrediting organization's requirements for accreditation; survey procedures; resources for conducting required surveys; capacity to furnish information for use in enforcement activities; monitoring procedures for provider entities found not in compliance with the conditions or requirements; and ability to provide us with the necessary data for validation.

Section 1865(b)(3)(A) of the Act further requires that we publish, within 60 days of receipt of an organization's complete application, a notice identifying the national accrediting

body making the request, describing the nature of the request, and providing at least a 30-day public comment period. We have 210 days from the receipt of a complete application to publish notice of approval or denial of the application.

The purpose of this proposed notice is to inform the public of CHAP's request for continued deeming authority for HHAs. This notice also solicits public comment on whether CHAP's requirements meet or exceed the Medicare conditions for participation for HHAs.

## III. Evaluation of Deeming Authority Request

CHAP submitted all the necessary materials to enable us to make a determination concerning its request for reapproval as a deeming organization for HHAs. This application was determined to be complete on September 3, 2007. Under section 1865(b)(2) of the Act and our regulations at § 488.8 (Federal review of accrediting organizations), our review and evaluation of CHAP will be conducted in accordance with, but not necessarily limited to, the following factors:

- The equivalency of CHAP's standards for an HHA as compared with CMS' HHA conditions of participation.
- CHAP's survey process to determine the following:
  - The composition of the survey team, surveyor qualifications, and the ability of the organization to provide continuing surveyor training.
  - The comparability of CHAP's processes to those of State agencies, including survey frequency, and the ability to investigate and respond appropriately to complaints against accredited facilities.
  - CHAP's processes and procedures for monitoring HHAs found out of compliance with CHAP's program requirements. These monitoring procedures are used only when CHAP identifies noncompliance. If noncompliance is identified through validation reviews, the State survey agency monitors corrections as specified at § 488.7(d).
  - CHAP's capacity to report deficiencies to the surveyed facilities and respond to the facility's plan of correction in a timely manner.
  - CHAP's capacity to provide us with electronic data in ASCII comparable code, and reports necessary for effective validation and assessment of the organization's survey process.
  - The adequacy of CHAP's staff and other resources, and its financial viability.
  - CHAP's capacity to adequately fund required surveys.

—CHAP's policies with respect to whether surveys are announced or unannounced, to assure that surveys are unannounced.

—CHAP's agreement to provide us with a copy of the most current accreditation survey together with any other information related to the survey as we may require (including corrective action plans).

## IV. Response to Public Comments and Notice Upon Completion of Evaluation

Because of the large number of public comments we normally receive on **Federal Register** documents, we are not able to acknowledge or respond to them individually. We will consider all comments we receive by the date and time specified in the **DATES** section of this preamble, and, when we proceed with a subsequent document, we will respond to the comments in the preamble to that document.

Upon completion of our evaluation, including evaluation of comments received as a result of this notice, we will publish a final notice in the **Federal Register** announcing the result of our evaluation.

## V. Collection of Information Requirements

This document does not impose information collection and recordkeeping requirements. Consequently, it need not be reviewed by the Office of Management and Budget under the authority of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. 35).

## VI. Regulatory Impact Statement

In accordance with the provisions of Executive Order 12866, the Office of Management and Budget did not review this proposed notice.

In accordance with Executive Order 13132, we have determined that this proposed notice would not have a significant effect on the rights of States, local or tribal governments.

**Authority:** Section 1865 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395bb). (Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Program No. 93.778, Medical Assistance Program; No. 93.773 Medicare—Hospital Insurance Program; and No. 93.774, Medicare—Supplementary Medical Insurance Program)

Dated: October 5, 2007.

**Kerry Weems,**

*Acting Administrator, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.*

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