



State of California—Health and Human Services Agency
Department of Health Care Services



ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER
Governor

Date: June 9, 2009

MMCD All Plan Letter 09-008

TO: ALL MEDI-CAL MANAGED HEALTH CARE PLANS

SUBJECT: PROCEDURES FOR SUBMITTING QIP DOCUMENTS AND NEW RESOURCES FOR PLANS

This All Plan Letter provides Medi-Cal managed care health plans with updated information about submitting Quality Improvement Project (QIP) documents and new resources available to assist with documenting QIPs.

Medi-Cal Managed Care Division (MMCD) All Plan Letter (APL) 08-009, dated October 27, 2008, required plans to submit QIP proposals, baseline report (if not included in the proposal), and annual status reports on the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA), *Quality Improvement Activity (QIA)* form. In addition, MMCD APL 08-009 instructed plans to send these reports directly to the EQRO for validation. In late 2008, DHCS contracted with the Health Services Advisory Group (HSAG) as its new External Quality Review Organization (EQRO). Because of the change in EQRO contractor, the process for documenting QIPs and submitting QIPs to the EQRO has changed, as follows:

Change in QIP Documentation Form Submission

- Effective July 1, 2009, plans must submit QIP documents – proposals and status reports -- on HSAG's *QIP Summary Form* instead of the NCQA QIA form. We encourage plans to immediately begin using this form, but are allowing time for the transition. HSAG's *QIP Summary Form* is available on HSAG's File Transfer Process (FTP) site, which is described below.
- Plans must continue to first submit QIP **proposals** to MMCD at qipmail@dhs.ca.gov for initial approval. Staff in MMCD's Medical Policy Section review and approve QIP proposals before the proposals are forwarded to the EQRO for validation. MMCD staff notifies plans via e-mail when a QIP proposal has been approved by MMCD and forwarded to the EQRO for validation. A QIP proposal is not considered fully approved until it has passed validation by the EQRO.

- Plans must use *QIP Summary Forms* to submit QIP **annual status reports** directly to the EQRO via HSAG's File Transfer Process (FTP) site and also submit a copy to MMCD at gipsmail@dhs.ca.gov. The FTP site allows for the secure exchange of large files between HSAG and the plan and is compliant with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act.
- All Medi-Cal managed care plans have already identified an FTP user within each plan in relation to the 2009 HEDIS audit process. If a different individual in the plan will be submitting QIP documents to HSAG, that person must establish a user profile with HSAG (creating a user name and establishing a password) in order to access their plan's specific folder. To establish another user profile for the purpose of submitting QIP documents to HSAG, the designated staff person at the plan should contact Denise Driscoll at DDriscoll@hsag.com.
- When HSAG receives approved QIP proposals from MMCD and QIP status reports from plans, HSAG then validates the QIP using its *QIP Validation Tool*, which documents findings for each step of the validation process. This ensures that the EQRO adheres to a structured, comparable validation process and that validation results are reliable, accurate and in compliance with the CMS protocols. The new *Quality Improvement Assessment Guide* (discussed below) provides detailed information about HSAG's validation process

Additional Technical Assistance for Plans

MMCD is working with HSAG to provide plans with enhanced technical assistance related to QIP design and documentation and to assure that QIPs are validated in accordance with the requirements of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). CMS's requirements related to QIPs are presented in two protocol documents, "Conducting Performance Improvement Projects" and "Validating Performance Improvement Projects," both available on the CMS website at http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MedicaidSCHIPQualPrac/07_Tools_Tips_and_Protocols.asp#TopOfPage under "EQR Managed Care Organization Protocol."

On May 20, 2009, MMCD released the new *Quality Improvement Assessment Guide for Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans* on the DHCS website at <http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/dataandstats/reports/Pages/MMCDQualPerfMsRpts.aspx>. Developed by HSAG, this guide was created to help plans understand the 10 critical activities for conducting QIPs and to provide additional resources and references related to QIP development and documentation. The *Guide* also includes completion instructions for HSAG's *QIP Summary Form* and step-by-step discussion of the EQRO's validation process and *QIP Validation Tool*.

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To provide plans with further assistance with QIP documentation, HSAG conducted two conference call training sessions in June 2009 for plan staff. The EQRO will continue to offer technical assistance to plans regarding QIPs documentation as needed, either in further group training sessions or plan-specific assistance by phone.

If you have questions about the information in this letter, please contact either Rita Marowitz in MMCD at Rita.Marowitz@dhcs.ca.gov or Jennifer Lenz at HSAG at JLenz@hsag.com.

We look forward to continuing to work with Medi-Cal managed care plans to improve the design and documentation of the required QIPs.

Sincerely,



Bob Martinez, Chief
Plan Monitoring/Program Integrity Branch