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**STATE BOARD OF REGISTRATION IN MEDICINE TO LEAD ON
NATIONAL PRACTITIONER IDENTIFIER PLAN**

In a manner unique to Massachusetts, the healthcare community is collaborating to implement a new Federal requirement that “covered providers” in the state obtain a National Provider Identifier (NPI). The state Board of Registration in Medicine, which licenses the Commonwealth’s 30,000 physicians, is taking the lead by helping Massachusetts physicians secure their NPI as part of the re-licensure process. The Board will also give physicians the option of authorizing the agency to get the NPI on their behalf. This process is called “bulk enumeration.” Bulk enumeration will be a convenient way for physicians and other health care providers to obtain their NPIs.

Board Executive Director Nancy Achin Audesse, “We recognize the critical importance of the NPI and felt we could play an important role in the process. We want to make compliance as easy as possible for the physicians in the state.”

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996, commonly known as HIPAA, required the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) to adopt a standard unique health identifier for health care providers; the NPI Final Rule adopted the NPI as this identifier. What is an NPI? It is a 10-position, numeric identifier designed to be used in HIPAA standard transactions. With few exceptions, it is assigned for life. The HHS Secretary delegated to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) the authority to develop the NPI enumeration process and the requirements concerning NPIs. Beginning May 23, 2005, covered providers could begin to apply for NPIs. By May 23, 2007, all HIPAA covered entities except small health plans must begin using NPIs in HIPAA standard transactions, such as claims, remittance advices and eligibility inquiries.

“Massachusetts is taking a leadership role in implementing the NPI mandate,” said Audesse. “The lessons learned from these efforts should have value to other states around the country.

Massachusetts has a history of collaborative efforts concerning healthcare data and transactions. A not-for-profit membership organization, the Massachusetts Health Data Consortium (Consortium) has convened collaborative groups in the past to address the implementation of national standards and the development of common systems in the state. When the NPI mandate was identified, the Consortium convened a workgroup with representatives from all major stakeholders in the community. The workgroup's goal was to minimize the disruptions that would result from issuing and implementing NPIs. The workgroup approached the Board about playing a central role in NPI enumeration and the Board stepped up to the challenge.

The Consortium's acting CEO, Lou Freedman said, "NPIs should simplify the process of getting bills paid. There is an exceptional sense of cooperation in the Massachusetts healthcare community and a cost-effective strategy for implementing NPIs has been developed and is being pursued. We hope it will yield good results for everyone involved with this huge CMS undertaking."

For more information, view the CMS Web site at:

<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/hipaa/hipaa2/regulations/identifiers/default.asp>

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