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| LOCAL COMMISSIONERS MEMORANDUM |
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DSS-4037EL (Rev. 9/89)

Transmittal No: 91 LCM-216

Date: December 10, 1991

Division: Medical Assistance

TO: Local District Commissioners

SUBJECT: Discontinuance of Toll-free Access to Medicaid Eligibility
Information

ATTACHMENTS: Provider Notification of 900-Service
"Attachment is Available On-Line"

Effective January 1, 1992, the Department will be discontinuing the toll-free access to Medicaid Eligibility information that we have provided since 1977. Instead, we will be installing 900-service and charging Medicaid providers \$.85 per minute for their calls. As is emphasized in the attached letter to providers, this action does not affect EMEVS. Calls to verify eligibility via EMEVS are, and will continue to be, free-of-charge.

The letter also details the reasons behind our actions. Please be assured that our intent is simply to pass along the cost to the relatively small number of users of this service. We do not expect that the local district staff will pick up the added task of providing this information. That does not, however, preclude providers from seeking that information from your Medicaid/Eligibility staff in an effort to avoid the charges they would incur when calling the 900-numbers.

It may be helpful to alert your staff to the possible increase in these types of inquiries. It is within your prerogative to respond or not, consistent with your current practices and staff availability. To minimize impact on your staff, callers with eligibility inquiries should be referred to EMEVS or the 900-numbers listed in the letter.

Providers with concerns or complaints about these new procedures should be directed to call our MMIS Provider Relations unit at 518-474-9033.

Jo-Ann A. Costantino
Deputy Commissioner
Division of Medical Assistance

ATTACHMENT

Dear Provider:

The Department of Social Services has been examining the various functions it performs in support of the Medicaid program. Two of these functions are being reconfigured as described below. These changes have no impact on the Electronic Medicaid Eligibility Verification System (EMEVS). A PHONE CALL TO EMEVS IS, AND WILL CONTINUE TO BE, A TOLL FREE CALL.

Non-EMEVS Recipient Eligibility Hotlines

Effective January 1, 1992, the Department will no longer provide toll-free access to its Recipient Eligibility Hotlines (1-800-342-3333 for New York City recipients; 1-800-342-3006 for non-New York City recipients). In its place, we will offer access via 900-service at a charge of \$.85 per minute. The new numbers are as follows:

- o For New York City Medicaid Recipients - 1-900-288-1910
- o For non-New York City Medicaid Recipients - 1-900-288-0904

This action is being taken due to the high costs incurred by the Department to support these hotlines, restricted operating budgets caused by tight fiscal constraints and in recognition of the need to curtail functions that may overlap with EMEVS, the primary source of eligibility information.

Since providers may still wish to acquire information about a recipient to whom a Medicaid service has been delivered, we will continue to support the Hotline function. We will also expand the hours of operations, on an experimental basis, from the present 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. to 7:30 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. to determine if providers find these earlier and later times more convenient.

Some organizations have installed "blockages" to prevent access to 900-service. Therefore, you may have to take specific actions to enable you to access 900-service within your facility. The telephone carrier with whom we will be working indicates that most premise-based equipment installed since 1985 has the ability to include or exclude such access for individual extensions within your organization. You should contact your own phone equipment vendor to determine your needs and capabilities.

The charges for use of this 900-service will be reflected on your regular telephone bill or on a separate bill from the phone carrier, depending on the practices of the phone company serving your geographic location. Please note that you may not pass this cost along to the Medicaid recipient.

Medicaid Payment Information Service

Effective on or about April 1, 1992, the Department will discontinue the cost-free reporting of Medicaid check amounts to providers every Monday morning. Instead, this information will be made available via 900-Service to any provider using a touch-tone telephone. The charge for each call will be \$3.00. The charge per call reflects our efforts to allocate the cost of certain non-mandated services directly to the users of such services. The Department will review the charge per call on a periodic basis to ensure that the revenues generated are sufficient to offset the costs incurred to provide the service. The charge per call will be adjusted downward or upward accordingly.

The new service will be available to all providers and will be accessible 24 hours per day, seven days per week. The payment information will be for current week's and the previous week's checks. As we gain experience with this function, additional features and information may become available, depending on interest and demand.

The Department recognizes that many providers have come to rely on the early release of check amount information to assist them in managing their cash flow. We believe that the introduction of the 900-service charge will have only a minimal impact on your costs. At the same time, we will be able to offer to all providers a service previously available, because of staffing restrictions, to only a limited number. The net result should be improved service and information to the entire provider community.

We would like to continue to provide you with these services and ask you to understand the circumstances that have brought us to our present course of action.

Sincerely,

Bernard J. Noonan
Director of MMIS
Division of Medical Assistance
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