

WHAT IS PQRS?

There has been a lot of confusion about the Medicare initiative PQRS, the Physician's Quality Review System, a program of incentives and penalties.

Here is how PQRS works: By submitting claims in 2013 that include codes for certain "quality measures" called Quality Data Codes (for example, administering a depression scale or alcohol screening), the provider has been able to earn a small bonus of .5% on the reimbursement rate for all patients in 2014. It is now too late to earn this bonus but by beginning to report QDCs you can avoid a penalty.

These codes are billed as a separate line item on the CMS-1500 with the charges listed as \$0.00. Medicare currently pays a bonus of 0.5% on all claims for 2014 if the provider has used three of these codes for 50% of their patients each in 2013. If the reimbursement rate for a psychotherapy visit is roughly \$64.00, the bonus will amount to \$.32 per visit. This will be issued separately as a single consolidated incentive payment at the beginning of 2015.

Not reporting incurs a penalty; however, participation is optional. If you submit no data for 2013 you will see a 1.5% penalty in 2015 on all reimbursement for 2014 (2% in 2016). (We calculate that 1.5% of \$64.00 is \$.96). The provider who has not reported any data in 2013 will lose close to a dollar on each visit in 2014, deducted in 2015. However **submitting even one QDC in 2013 avoids a penalty.**

Do not worry about an October deadline for enrolling. Just start billing Medicare patients using the QDCs.

To view a sample claim form including QDCs go to
http://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Quality-Initiatives-Patient-Assessment-Instruments/PQRS/Downloads/2013_PQRS_sampleCMS1500claim_12-19-2012.pdf

What You Need to Do Now:

Visit these Medicare sites:

<http://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Quality-Initiatives-Patient-Assessment-Instruments/PQRS/index.html?redirect=/PQRS/>

<http://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Quality-Initiatives-Patient-Assessment-Instruments/PQRS/Payment-Adjustment-Information.html>

Read this excellent overview by Laura Groshong, LICSW, Director of Government Relations for the Clinical Social Work Association:

<http://www.clinicalsocialworkassociation.org/sites/default/files/CSWA%20-%20PQRS%20Options%20for%20LCSWs%20%28revised%29%20-%209-24-13%20%282%29.pdf>

Report at least one QDC on your claims for 2013 to avoid a penalty for this year. (You have until February 28, 2014, to report.)

Use Medicare's QualityNet Help Desk: 866-288-8912.

Get help from Linda Plastrik, Westchester Member of the Vendorship and Managed Care Committee. She signed up in February 2013 and would be glad to answer questions about her experience with PQRS. Contact her at lp_tunedin@aol.com.

---Helen T. Hoffman, LCSW, Chair, Vendorship and Managed Care Committee