
FEHB Program Carrier Letter

All Carriers

U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Office of Insurance Programs

Letter No. 2001-23

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Fee-for-service [18] Experience-rated HMO [21] Community-rated HMO [22]

SUBJECT: Revised patient safety standards

While many of you may already know this, we wanted to bring to your attention new standards drafted by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations that require hospitals to inform patients and their families when they have been hurt by a medical error.

The revised standards make clear that, "The safety of health care delivery is enhanced by the involvement of the patient...as a partner in the health care process." Patient safety standards are not altogether new, yet the detail and emphasis in this area is enriched by explicitly naming patients and family members as integral to the decision-making process. The new standards serve to hold hospitals accountable for a higher level of patient safety. Hospitals are expected to be proactive in their efforts to prevent errors, and to practice full disclosure when internal reports reveal errors. A much greater responsibility is now placed on the hospital leadership's role in an organization-wide safety program.

This is a wonderful opportunity for you to enhance your patient safety program through member education. We encourage you to review the standards and promote them where you think appropriate. To view the standards, go to http://www.jcaho.org/standard/fr_ptsafety.html (the space between "fr" and "ptsafety" is an underline mark like this _.)

Sincerely,



Abby L. Block
Assistant Director
for Insurance Programs