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September 26, 2001

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To: CBA Home and Community Support Services (HCSS) Agencies
Community Living Assistance and Support Services (CLASS) Agencies
Consumer Managed Personal Assistance Service (CMPAS) Agencies
Deaf/Blind Agencies
Medically Dependent Children Program (MDCP) Agencies
Primary Home Care (PHC) Agencies
In-Home Respite Agencies

Subject: Long Term Care (LTC)
Information Letter No. 01-15
Telephony Software

Advances in computer and telephone software have made possible a new technology generally referred to as "Telephony". Telephony software enables agencies providing hourly-based services (i.e. Personal Attendant Services (PAS); Nursing; and/or Therapies) to call in hours worked through a telephone system, rather than completing paper timesheets. These systems use Caller ID technology to ensure the attendant, nurse, or therapist is placing the "log in / log out" calls from the client's home, rather than from another location. There are several companies offering Telephony software, and each one has different reporting capabilities. These reports would take the place of paper service delivery records for attendant, nurse, or therapist time worked.

Several home health agencies have requested approval to use these systems for attendant, nurse and/or therapist time tracking, in lieu of paper timesheets. The Texas Department of Human Services (DHS) has reviewed the information on these products, and has determined that use of the systems may meet the necessary requirements for DHS compliance. In order to meet the necessary compliance, agencies would need to ensure that the software they choose has the following reporting capabilities:

- Type of service provided and dates of service delivery;
- Total time worked per day for each client in actual time;
- Total time billed per day, per month for each client (this takes into account any rounding done by the system prior to billing);

- Identification of all the attendants, nurses, or therapists who worked for the client during the review period who utilized telephony for logging in and out;
- Any Log In or Log Out calls made from a phone other than the client's home phone;
- Changes made to the system after the attendant, nurses, or therapists has called in his/her time, with the name of the agency staff member making the changes and the reason for the change.

These reports must be made available upon the immediate request of DHS staff.

The system must also have the capability of rounding billing time to the nearest quarter-hour increment.

Agencies opting to use the Telephony software must maintain software documentation that will provide at a minimum a flow chart of transactions processing through the system, detail the internal controls over computer processing, detail the internal controls over access to the software applications, and detail the internal controls over the input of data into the software application.

In addition, agencies opting to use Telephony software in lieu of paper timesheets will be required to have a backup system in place in the event the agency system is unavailable for use. Likewise, when selecting a company to provide Telephony, agencies must ensure the software has a backup system in the event an emergency occurs at the main system site. Agencies will also be required to continue the use of paper timesheets for those clients who have no telephone.

HCSS Agencies opting to use telephony software will need to ensure tasks performed are documented in the agency files or available through system report. Tasks performed and billed must fall under the billable tasks.

Agencies planning to use this new technology must send written notification to their contract manager or program consultant to show the effective date as the first day of a month, but no earlier than November 1, 2001.

DHS will suspend reviewing all PHC agencies for administrative errors effective November 1, 2001. DHS will also suspend reviewing all CBA HCSS agencies for administrative errors on hourly based services (40TAC §48.6090 (a) (1) (A) - (M)) effective November 1, 2001.

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Please note that DHS will continue to review CBA HCSS agencies for administrative errors on requisition fees (40TAC §48.6090 (a) (2) (A) - (D)).

Please call your contract manager or program consultant if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

signature on file

Becky Beechinor
Assistant Deputy Commissioner
Long Term Care Services

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