

## Special Edition

### 8-Digit Date Mandated Starting April 5, 1999

Beginning April 5, 1999 claims submitted to Medicare that are not Y2K compliant will be returned!

<http://www.hcfa.gov/medicare/edi/edi3.htm>

and for HCFA-1500 paper claims at:

<http://www.hcfa.gov/medicare/edi/edi/5.htm>

Health Care Financing Administration has instructed contractors to return as unprocessable claims received on or after April 5, 1999 if they are not Y2K compliant. Y2K specifications for electronic media claims can be found at:

*The following Y2K articles were published in Medicare Provider News in June and September 1998.*

***T***here are **NO** appeal rights for claims returned either from the mailroom or denied on the remittance as not being Y2K compliant. Rather, submit to Medicare a new and correct claim.

### Millennium Update: Changes to the HCFA-1500 Instructions

As of April 5, 1999, you will be required to enter 8-digit birth dates on Form HCFA-1500 for Medicare, Part B claims. This includes entering 2-digit months (MM) and days (DD), and 4-digit years (CCYY). The reporting requirement for 8-digit birth dates will not require a revision to the HCFA-1500 claim form. However, the instructions and printing specifications for the HCFA-1500 claim form were changed so 8-digit birth dates can be reported.

Please note that 8-digit birth dates must be reported with a space between month, day, and year (i.e., MM\_DD\_CCYY). On the HCFA-1500 claim form, the space between month, day, and year is delineated by a dotted, vertical line.

To illustrate, if the patient's birth date is January 21, 1935, then you would enter the following in item 3 of Form HCFA-1500:

3. Patient's Birth Date		
MM	DD	YY
01	21	1935

If you do not submit 8-digit birth dates as of April 5, 1999, your claim will be returned to you as unprocessable.

#### HCFA-1500 Fields Affected by New Reporting Requirement:

- Item 3 Patient's Birth Date
- Item 9b Other Insured's Date of Birth
- Item 11a Insured's Date of Birth

HCFA-1500 Fields Not Affected by New Reporting Requirement:

Item 11b	Employer's Name or School Name
Item 12	Patient or Authorized Person's Signature Date
Item 14	Date of Current Illness, Injury, or Pregnancy
Item 16	Dates Patient Unable to Work in Current Occupation
Item 18	Hospitalization Dates Related to Current Illness
Item 19	Reserved for Local Use
Item 24a	Date(s) of Service
Item 31	Signature of Physician/Supplier

*Note:* Item 15 is not required for Medicare, Part B services.

You may enter either a 6 or 8-digit date for these fields (items 11b, 12, 14, 16, 18, 19, 24a, and 31) as of April 5, 1999.

If you choose to enter 8-digit dates for these fields, please note the following:

- Form HCFA-1500 does not have to be revised to capture 8-digit dates for the above fields.
- All date fields, except for item 24a, must be reported with a space between month, day, and year (i.e., MM\_DD\_CCYY). On Form HCFA-1500, the space between month, day, and year is delineated by a dotted, vertical line.
- Item 24a must be reported as one continuous number (i.e., MMDDCCYY), without any spaces between month, day, and year. By entering a continuous number, the date(s) in item 24a will penetrate the dotted, vertical lines used to separate month, day, and year. Our claims processing system will be able to process your claim if you penetrate these vertical lines. However, all 8-digit dates reported must stay within the confines of item 24a.

- Do not compress or change the font of the "year" field in item 24a to keep the date within the confines of item 24a. If you enter a continuous number in item 24a with no spaces between month, day, and year, you will not need to compress the "year" field to remain within the confines of item 24a.
- The "from" date in item 24a must not run into the "to" date field, and the "to" date must not run into item 24b.
- Dates reported in item 24a must not be reported with a slash between month, day, and year.
- If you decide to enter 8-digit dates for items 11b, 12, 14, 16, 18, 19, 24a, or 31, you must enter 8-digit dates for all these fields. For instance, you are not permitted to enter 8-digit dates for items 11b, 12, 14, 16, 18, 19, 31 and a 6-digit date for item 24a. The same applies to those who wish to submit 6-digit dates for these fields.

If you do not adhere to the above requirements, your claim will be returned to you as unprocessable as of April 5, 1999.

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## HCFA Sets Up a Vaccination Program Against the Millennium Bug

**Everyone Who Hasn't Been Marooned on a Desert Island Must Have Heard of the Millennium Bug by Now!**

Many computer systems in the public and private sectors will be affected by the Year 2000 Millennium (Y2K) bug if no action is taken in a necessary debugging procedure.

For many years, computer systems have carried two-position date fields. Unless modified, the fields will assume the year 2000 is 1900. This misinterpretation will cause systems to shutdown, result in calculation errors, or place at risk the inter-action with other data systems.

Year 2000 bugs have already run amok in a few data systems as discussed in recent newspaper articles. A commonly reported error is that some credit card

processing systems cannot accept credit cards with expiration dates of 2000 or later. Such systems reject the "00" as being invalid, thereby causing a major problem for both businesses and their customers. A similar error may already have occurred in some health care providers' offices data systems when patients attempted to pay their bills with credit cards having expiration dates of 2000 and beyond.

In essence, health care providers have many chances of becoming bedeviled by Y2K bugs not only in the credit card processing system but in their other systems such as automated payroll, billing, appointment, and patient records. This same Y2K problem also applies to many diagnostic and treatment machines that have an internal clock built in their computer chips or software, including personal computers.

To avoid the Y2K bug, computer users should contact the vendor who provided the software, hardware, or medical equipment to make sure that it is certified to continue working properly in the year 2000.

The Y2K bug is not only an operational nuisance but a legal liability issue as well. Many attorneys believe that unless a business (health care provider) takes "reasonable and prudent" measures to avoid Y2K bugs, they could be liable for any harm or damage that their customers (patients) and suppliers may incur.

While the systems in your health care organization may be bug-free, the cashflow operation can still be disrupted if the managed care and fee-for-service payers have bugs in their systems that prevent claims from being received, processed, or paid.

In conjunction with Medicare carriers and intermediaries, the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) is working diligently to make sure that Medicare's computer systems and networks will be Y2K bug-free. For example, HCFA has a program to systematically assess, renovate and test each mission critical system in all its facilities, as well as those of each carrier and intermediary.

HCFA's internal deadline allows time to fix any problems that might have escaped detection during renovation and testing. In addition, Medicare carriers and intermediaries will test their electronic data interchanges with the hospital information system, billing system, and billing service. This testing ensures that these systems interface and work properly with no interruption in claims and payments processing after the clock ticks at midnight on January 1, 2000.

From President Clinton to Donna E. Shalala to Nancy-Ann DeParle, there is support and urgency for the Y2K project. "At HCFA, everyone has a commitment to ensure that Medicare customers will not encounter payment disruptions caused by a bug in our systems," Gary Christoph, HCFA's Chief Information Officer recently said.

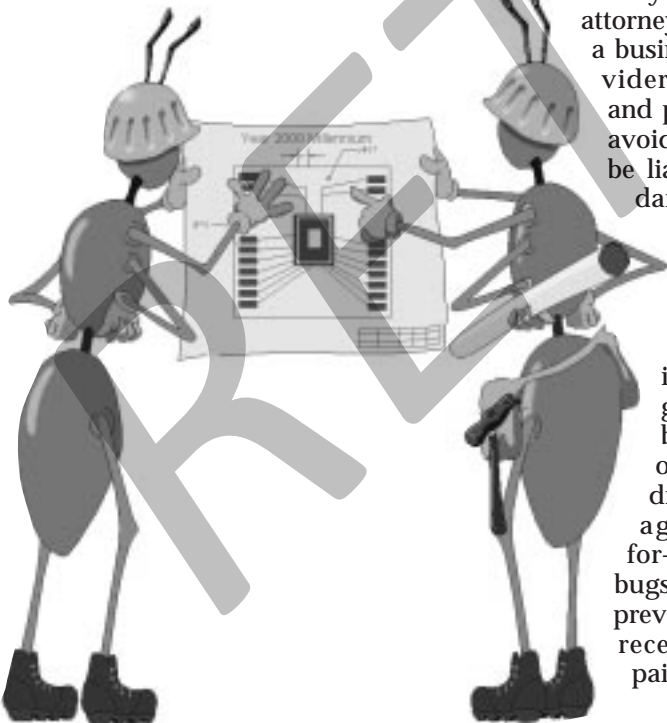
In addition to vendors, the Internet is a good place to look for more information about Y2K problems. The following Web sites contain useful information:

<http://www.year2000.com>  
(general technical and legal information)

<http://www.fda.gov/cdrh/yr2000/yr2000.html>  
(medical equipment)

<http://www.hcfa.gov>  
(Medicare)

*Dr. Gary Christoph, HCFA's Chief Information Officer and Director of the Office of Information Services contributed to this article.*



*If you have questions or need further information, contact Provider Services at  
Toll Free (877) 482-9056 or (570) 735-9445*

*Electronic billers can contact the EDI Department at  
(570) 735-9429*

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