

STRATFORD

Volume 20.05

Healthcare EDI and Management Software

May 1996

stratford notes

Stratford customers are ready for the coming changes in healthcare reimbursement. The federal government is getting closer to the day that electronic transmission of claims is required. On March 28, 1996 the House passed HR 3103. This legislation was sponsored by Rep. William Archer (R-Texas). This law contains language written by Rep. David Hobson (R-Ohio). This law mandates that healthcare payers must use EDI standards and implement the formats within four years. "Standards" are defined as those developed by accredited organizations of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). The law covers private and public health care plans.

The Secretary of Health will adopt standards within eighteen months for electronic claims and encounters. This includes coordination of benefits, enrollment and dis-enrollment, eligibility, payment and remittance advice, premium payments, first report of injury, claims status, and referral certification and authorization. In addition, standards for claims attachments would be adopted within thirty months.

The Secretary of Health will adopt unique identifiers for individuals, employers, health plans and providers, as well as standards for electronic signatures.

The law has strong confidentiality language. Violations of patient confidentiality carry penalties up to \$250,000 in fines and/or 10 years

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imprisonment.

This law may not pass the Senate in its present form but the requirements for standardized transmission of claims is obviously going to be required.

As all Stratford customers know, the Stratford software includes the ANSI formats at no additional charge. Stratford does not charge for setup or for transmitting claims. Stratford (optionally) charges only for support of the software. Even if you are not now using the ANSI format for transmitting your claims, you have the software and you can begin using it if your payers will accept it.

We are not aware of any Stratford customers who are using an electronic format that is not approved by all Medicare contractors after the July 1, 1996 deadline. If you receive any notices about changing your format, please let us know immediately. •

Training Classes
SHS Software Basic Training

In the Stratford Classroom:

Every Friday	9:30 AM -12:00 PM	\$165
	1:30 PM - 4:00 PM	\$165
By Appointment		\$165

Call for class availability at least three days in advance.
On-site training with a certified Stratford trainer may be available (*by appointment only*). The cost is \$250.
Telephone training is available (*by appointment only*).

FROM THE EDI CORNER.....

Blue Shield of California is rejecting claims if they contain lower case letters. Stratford has always recommended that our users should use upper case only when doing data entry (page 17 & 18 in the manual). For those people who still use lower case we have put a case conversion routine in the software. If this affects you and you have not received an update, please let us know.

You should also be aware that we believe there will be a future requirement that no punctuation be in your claims. We have had customers insist on putting in commas and dashes, etc. in the names and addresses. Don't be surprised if you get rejections sometime in the future. The reason is simple. Most computer programs are confused by punctuation. Another problem for computers is non-standard abbreviations. The post office can delay your mail if you use a comma between the

city and state in your addresses.

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EDI "per-claim" charges

Stratford does not have any "per-claim" or other charges related to transmitting claims to Medicare or any other carrier. We only charge (optional) for supporting

**I CAN'T
LOAD**

YOUR UPDATE DISKETTES

We get this complaint approximately one time for every 300 updates that we send out. While it is, of course possible that one of our diskettes is bad, we take many precautions to avoid it. Our duplicating machine is checked periodically using a reference diskette from "Drive Probe". This is considered to be the standard in the industry. If any of our drives is questionable (even if it passes the test) we immediately remove it from service. When we have large batches of updates made we use only vendors who have the ISO quality rating. When we make a diskette set, we use the program "DiskDupe". This program writes to the diskette and then compares the diskette with the master file. If there is a difference, the diskette is rejected. As a further quality assurance step, we always place each diskette in a different machine so the diskette can be compared using completely different hardware. Every time someone complains, we randomly select an update and load it on other workstations here at Stratford. We are absolutely certain that all diskettes that leave Stratford are good. Other potential problems: We generally ship via UPS. If the diskettes are exposed to magnetism, the diskette can be partially erased. Another problem is a dirty diskette drive on the customer computer. This is very common because the fan in the power supply pulls room air through the diskette drive opening. If the computer is on the floor it can accumulate a lot of dust and lint. The best solution is to have a can of compressed air and blow air into the drive. Then get a cleaning kit at the local computer store. •

INTERNET CORNER

We have recently updated our homepage on our web server. We have put in more customer homepages. We have also put in more links to other healthcare related sites.

You may not be aware of it but many schools have a web site. If you have children you should check to see if their school has an Internet address.

Last month, President Clinton visited a school across the bay from us. He was supporting Net Day. This is an effort to connect all California schools to the Internet. Stratford donated resources to a local school to support the effort.

We attend the monthly meetings of Software Forum in Palo Alto California. This is a meeting attended by most of the well known software people. One of the people at our table works for a company that receives nearly 100% of its support requests by email over the Internet. We were told that some days they receive only one or two phone calls in an afternoon. We believe this is the future of software support as well as sales and marketing.

At this time, Stratford has very few customers who are connected to the Internet. If you are connected, you can send an email and receive support now. As we begin receiving more requests for support by email, we will expand the service. You may send a request for support to:
support@stratfordsoftware.com
If you want the email to go to a specific person, you may put that name •

Stratford will run your Stratford software related classified ad in our monthly newsletter *free*, upon SHS approval!



CONNECTING YOUR COMPUTER TO A REMOTE LOCATION

We get requests from people who want to work at home or connect a second office location to their main computer or network. Our recommendation (at this time) is to use "remote control" software such as Close-Up. We are presently evaluating the new version of Lap Link which is designed for Windows 95.

This method requires you to have a workstation on the local (host) network to run the programs so the remote location can call in and control it. This seems like it would be expensive. It may cost more than you want to pay, but it is the best way. Other methods are even more expensive

★ California Healthcare ★
★ Management ★
★ is running seminars in medical billing. ★
★ The basic seminar for \$50 will be held ★
★ on a Saturday, from 9AM to 2PM. ★
★ The advanced seminar for \$100 will be ★
★ held on a Saturday, from 9AM to 2PM. ★
★ To secure reservations, mail checks to: ★
★ CHM ★
★ 2130 Palmetto Ave. ★
★ Pacifica, CA 94044 ★
★ For exact dates and times call ★
★ (415) 359-4195 ★

SOFTWARE SUPPORT UPDATE

We are well into our second year of the expanded software support project. Everything is relatively stable. The Atlanta, Georgia group is taking a large number of the calls. We are getting an extensive amount of data regarding individual client calling patterns. We are creating a profile for each client so that each one will pay an amount that covers the amount of support actually being used.

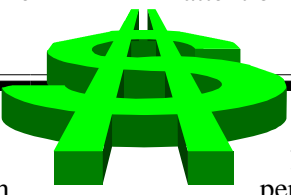
As of April 15, 1996 our numbers indicate the following averages for the period beginning 12/01/95 (not per month!):

- number of Stratford calls per client: 3.32
- number of "800" calls per client: 2.89

Those clients using significantly more support than the average will receive a notice of a change in their rate for the next billing period. We are tracking the usage over a 120+ day "window" so that a problem in one month will not change the monthly rate. This time will be extended to one year eventually.

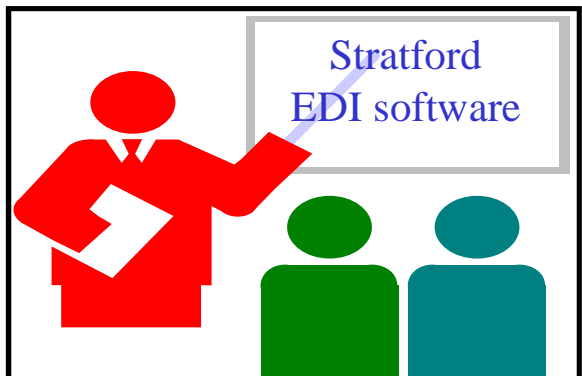
Fax is the best way to get support for problems related to EDI which the regular "800" support line cannot handle: (415) 692 1073.

We still have users who fax and call many times during the day because we do not respond within minutes. We will almost never be able to respond within minutes. We are usually working on projects that take 30 minutes to 2 weeks to do. We cannot drop everything to respond. We will do our best to let you know that we have received your fax and we are working on a solution. All problems are very important to us. We must give the same attention to everyone. •



will pay for each person* you refer who purchases Stratford Software at full price (\$895). Simply call or write to give us your referral. We will take care of the rest!

Stratford you \$100



ADVANCED TIP OF THE MONTH

Priority support service: The fastest way to get support for most problems is to call the 800 number. Except for about one hour on Friday afternoon, there will be a trained support technician available to answer your call.

If your problem is related to electronic claims or hardware/networks, you may need to contact the Burlingame office by fax. **If you send a fax with a description of the problem, your call is given priority over other calls.** If you call and leave a message, your call is placed at the bottom of the call-back list. We must do everything we can to avoid "phone-tag" so that we may help the maximum number of people per day. **Do not call more than one time. The second call places your first call at the bottom of**

Stratford Newsletter

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New Software Sales Only (800) 274-4594