stratford notes

You can find Stratford's Internet server at this address:

The Medicare program is changing many of its procedures and requirements and it may affect the way and amount that providers are paid. Since we specialize in EDI we are most interested in changes related to electronic claims.

For many years, HCFA has provided a toll-free telephone number to all "PAR" providers. This is being eliminated now and beginning no later than January 1, 1999, all providers will be required to pay for their transmission phone call.

To help with the costs, most Medicare contractors are requiring at least a 14,400 BAUD modem. The old standard was 2400 BAUD. BAUD refers to the speed of the modem. The faster the BAUD rate, the faster information can be transmitted, and so the shorter the phone call.

Many payers will accept a "zipped" file. This is a file that has been compressed to make it much smaller.

Another improvement is the ANSI X.12 transaction set format for electronic claims. This format is much smaller than the old "flat file" formats that were used by all payers before 1994.

All of these "new" features have been available to all Stratford users for many years.

As we have reported in past newsletters,

the Stratford program has been accepted by EDS for distribution to providers for the purpose of transmitting Medicare claims.

Since HCFA has contracted with EDS to provide the software that will be used to process all Medicare claims in the United States, this makes the Stratford program the ideal choice for providers to use for transmitting their Medicare claims.

We hope to make the Stratford program the standard for Medicare claim transmission.

Since most payers eventually adopt the same formats and procedures that Medicare uses, this will make Stratford the best software choice for transmitting claims for all payers. •

FROM THE EDI CORNER ......

Your clearinghouse or Medicare payer may require you to call a new phone number in the near future. You can make the change yourself in most cases. From the main directory, select number 1, then number 4 and then number 8 for Maintain the EDI master data files. Then enter the form number. If you have any problems with this, you may need an update. Please fax a request to 650 692 1073. . •

STRATFORD MANUAL, CUSTOM PRINTED

Several of our users have asked if they could get the manual on 8 ½ X 11 paper so they could 3-hole punch it and put it into a binder. Our "older" customers will remember back in the early 1980's when that is exactly how we did it. We changed to the present perfect-binding style when the cost became cheaper because of our volume. The present manual is also lighter and takes less space for the same number of pages.

It is easy to get the manual in Microsoft Word '97 format. Just send an email to manual@stratfordsoftware.com and request it.

Be sure that you include the 6-digit account number on your monthly statement. We will email an address to you on the Internet where you can download the manual and print it yourself on any type of paper you wish. If you don't have Microsoft Word 97, you can download a free reader from Microsoft's web site: www.microsoft.com. If, for some reason, you don't want to print 350 pages on your printer, you can put the file that you download onto a floppy diskette and take it to Kinkos or most other print shops and they can print it for you. We do not do custom printing like this any more because the print shops can do it much cheaper (and better).

As most of you know, almost all commercial (bubble-pak) software packages do not come with printed documentation anymore. If there is a printed manual, it is very small and usually only covers installation issues. We are planning to use this type of on-line documentation with our new "Windows only" product when it is released. We will do a poll to find out how much interest there is in having a printed manual. If there is enough interest, we will, of course, provide it. Otherwise, if the number of people who want a printed manual is very small, we will need to make other arrangements. •

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 providing software support.

HEALTHCARE BILLING CERTIFICATIONS

Some of our customers have asked if we know a place that they can get some training for medical billing. We do have our "certified trainers" and they do consulting so this is one resource.

If you are interested in becoming certified in a specific specialty or for patient accounting here are some references.

The American Academy of Professional Coders offer the CPC and the CPC-H certifications.

The American Health Information Management Association offers the RRA, ART, CCS and CCS-P certifications.

The American Association of Healthcare Administrative Management (AAHAM, formerly the American Guild of Patient Account Management - AGPAM) offers the Certified Patient Account Manager (CPAM) and the Certified Patient Account Technician (CPAT) which are for hospital patient account issues. The Certified Clinic Account manager (CCAM) and the Certified Clinic Account technician (CCAT) are for clinic and physician office patient account issues. Their website is: http://www.aaham.org

The National Electronic Billers Association (NEBA) offers the Healthcare Reimbursement Specialist certification. Their website is: http://www.nebasone.com

EVALUATION AND

Stratford will run your Stratford software related classified ad in our monthly newsletter *free*, upon SHS approval! Fax your ad to us at (650) 692-1073.

MANAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS

Recently a consulting firm was advertising in many states that the new 1997 Medicare documentation requirements for Evaluation and Management services was being enforced in 1998. The consulting firm was offering a 1/2 day seminar to educate providers about the new guidelines.

Medicare contractors will not be enforcing the 1997 E&M requirements until further notice and definitely not in 1998.

Another requirement for physician services performed for residents of skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) has been indefinitely placed on hold. This requirement was for the facility id, name and address on claims.

Another requirement for hospital services billing has been delayed until January 1, 1999. This is a requirement for the facility provider number in claims that have a place of service 21, 22, or 23. •
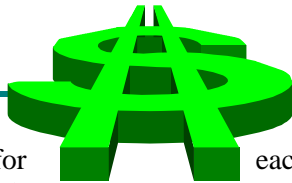
SOFTWARE SUPPORT NOTES

1 **Faxed requests for support get <u>Priority</u> <u>Service</u>.**

2 **If you send a fax with a description of the problem, your call is given priority over other faxes**.

3 **Do not call more than one time. The second call places your first call at the bottom of our callback list.**

We can receive many calls in the first few hours each day. It usually is not possible for us to have a technical support person waiting to take your call. If you just call and leave the message "please call", your call is placed at the bottom of the callback list. We must do everything we can to avoid "phone-tag". Hand-written faxes can be almost impossible to read, so please type them whenever possible. Include the best time to call you.
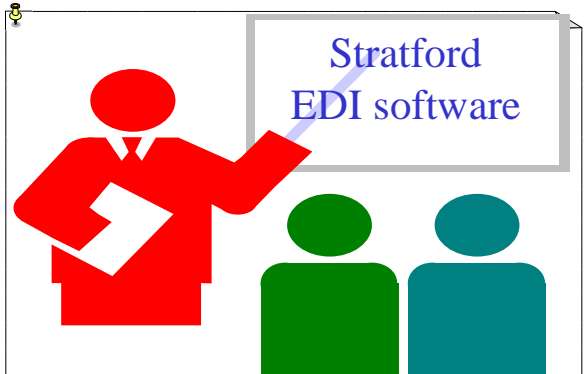
At this time we can deliver support by email. If you check your email each day, you may find this to be easier than faxing us. This is not very good support if you need a quick answer. We do not get very many support email messages so we only check the mail two or three times each day. As the volume increases, we will put more resources into email.

We are interested in hearing from people who would like to receive support by email. •

Stratford   will pay you $100 for   each person* you refer who   purchases Stratford Software at full price ($895). Simply fax or write to give us your referral. **We must receive the referral notice in advance of the sale**. **We cannot pay for a referral if you notify us after the sale.**
*<u>Subject to restrictions</u>

Stratford EDI software

INTERNET RESOURCES

Subject: Re: What is the URL to access the Federal Register

Note: To access Federal Register entries on the Internet:
go to the Superintendent of Documents homepage
`http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs`
Click on "Search Databases".
Scroll down to "Federal Register"
Click the "default" (1998 Federal Register)

You may scroll down to "Issue Date" and type in the "Date Range" for your search (as far back as 1994); then type in "Search Terms" using key words (see helpful hints on that page about searching). •