

STRATFORD

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Healthcare EDI and Management Software

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stratford notes

Stratford software is Year 2000 compliant and always has been. We have always stored the date with the full, 4-digit year. Since the very first version which was designed in the mid-1970's we have stored all dates with the century. It really seems strange that there are actually healthcare software packages that do not do this. How do they store birthdates for people born in the 1800's?

In the past few months we have been getting inquiries from other software vendors and healthcare providers with software that will not work next year. Many software vendors are getting out of the business and have notified their customers that they must change software. If a software package has been designed "from the ground up" with 2 digit years, it is very expensive to change. There are several major issues. The first is obvious: you must change all your software code to accept and store the date in a different format. A related issue is not so obvious and may be very difficult to solve. This is the database structure itself. It may not be possible to make more space in the database tables. The last issue is the most difficult of all and could be impossible. This is the problem of updating all the customer databases.

We are also getting "trading partner surveys" from payers and clearinghouses. These surveys are designed to assess the "Y2K" liability exposure that these companies have. We separate these surveys into two categories. One group is

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Stratford has more than **3,900** licensed users

obviously trying to find out which of "trading partners" can/will share their liability exposure. We believe this group will not be ready for the year 2000.

The other, "good", group is trying to determine the extent of their exposure and set up testing procedures for solving the potential problems. We believe this group will be ready for the year 2000. This group will probably have 90 percent of all the problems solved before the year 2000. The remaining problems must be solved one at a time as they are recognized. Remember that not all problems start on January 1. Some of the problems will not begin until February 29, 2000 if the software package does not "know" that 2000 is a leap year. If this is the case, the user will be entering transactions dated March 1st when it should be February 29th. It is too bad this will occur at a month end when everyone is busy. •

You can find Stratford's Internet server at this address:
<http://www.stratfordsoftware.com/>

Training Classes ***SHS Software Basic Training***

In the Stratford Classroom:

Every Friday	9:30 AM -12:00 PM	\$225
	1:30 PM - 4:00 PM	\$225
By Appointment		\$225

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 also available (*by appointment only*).

FROM THE EDI CORNER

We have received written notice from Blue Cross of California that they will begin rejecting claims that do not have 4 digit years soon. They will give an advance warning. At first they will return the claim to you.

If you do not subscribe to support and you do not have your Blue Cross update, be sure to let us know by fax (650) 692 1073 before your claims are rejected. We believe there may be approximately 800 customers who need this update, but we can't track them if they don't have a support agreement.

We believe that all Medicare contractors are rejecting claims that are not Y2K compliant now or soon will be. •

MEDICAL BILLING TRAINING

Some time ago we had an article about some Medicare training courses that you could take online. This is an update. HCFA has some training courses at this web site:

[Www.medicaretraining.com](http://www.medicaretraining.com)

These are "computer based training"

courses. You download them onto your computer and then you work through them at your own pace. Some topics available are:

1. HCFA 1500
2. Home Health Agency
3. HCFA 1450 (UB92)
4. Fraud and Abuse
5. ICD-9-CM Diagnosis coding
6. Medicare secondary payer
7. Front office management
8. Introduction to the world of Medicare

Each course has a complete (very readable) description that tells you who the course was designed for and the learning objectives.

Stratford's specialty is "getting the money in", or as one customer put it "helping the provider pay the rent". Courses like this do the same thing. If you code correctly, you get paid faster. Money is worth more today than it is tomorrow so it is important to file your claims correctly and quickly.

The Stratford program is specifically designed to help you bill correctly. The program flow naturally helps you enter the information necessary to file claims correctly.

When you create your insurance forms, the Stratford program has many edits, built in, to trap errors and report them to you, before the claim is sent to the payer. This helps you send claims that get paid quickly. Payers like it because it saves them money processing the claim. It is a win-win arrangement. •

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.

HCFA'S DEFINITION OF Y2K COMPLIANCE

Year 2000 compliant means information technology (including non-IT systems such as elevators and facility security) and business procedures which accurately process date/time data (including, but not limited to, calculating, comparing, and sequencing) from, into, and between the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries, as well as the years 1999 and 2000 and leap year calculations. Furthermore, Year 2000 compliant information technology, when used in combination with other information technology, shall accurately process date/time data if the other information technology properly exchanges date/time data with other systems. Additionally, any imbedded information systems technology such as elevator and environmental control systems are also required to demonstrate Year 2000 compliance as well.

The Stratford program is Year 2000 compliant using this definition. We have thousands of users who have not been updated for Y2K compliance. The reason is that they do not subscribe to monthly software support. We advise all users to get an update now instead of waiting until the end of the year. This is necessary even though the Stratford program has always been "technically" Y2K compliant. We have always stored the date with a four digit year, but until recently most payers required the claims to be printed and/or transmitted with 2 digit years, so that is the way the program created the claims. All payers

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.



have now changed the requirements (or soon will) and so we have changed the way the program creates the claims. This does not require any changes to the data, but it does require changes to the program itself.

As far as Stratford is concerned, this is just another change in billing requirements. There are always changes and so we constantly change our program to keep up with the payer requirements.

Stratford customers who subscribe to software support know they will receive timely updates. For those customers who have continuing monthly support, we keep information about which payers the customer transmit to. When one of those payers changes the billing requirements, we change our program and our computer sends updates to the people who need them. This is why it is important to read your statement each month. We list each payer that we are tracking for you. •

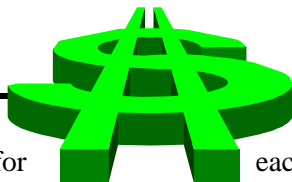
SOFTWARE SUPPORT NOTES

- 1 **Faxed requests for support get Priority Service.**
- 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.

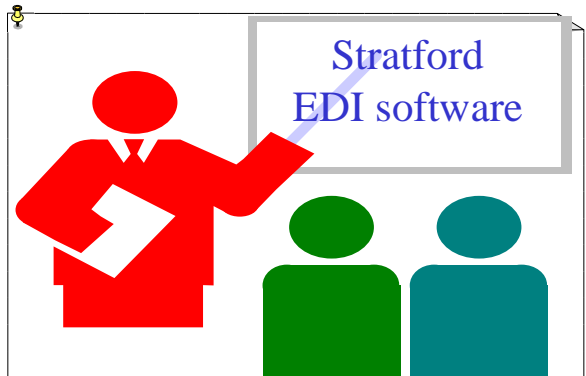
At this time we can deliver support by email. If you check your email each day, you may find this to be easier than faxing us. This is not very good support if you need a quick answer. We do not get very many support email messages so we only check the mail two or three times each day. As the volume 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.**

*Subject to restrictions



INTERNET RESOURCES

Re: New EDI formats are coming....

In past newsletters we had articles about the various versions of ANSI X.12 formats that were required for Medicare transmissions. The new v4010 (which we coded more than one year ago) is now official. It is coming, possibly as early as July 2000. More information is available from HCFA and other government sources. Here is a web site with some dates and official time tables:

[Http://aspe.os.DHHS.gov/admnsimp](http://aspe.os.DHHS.gov/admnsimp)

This web is titled: Department of Health and Human services Administrative Simplification.

Stratford Newsletter

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