



FEDERAL UPDATE: Bills Seek Equity, Improvement of Hospital Readmissions Program

Hospitals are subject to a penalty if certain Medicare patients are readmitted to the hospital within 30 days of a prior hospital admission. The penalty counts even if the readmission is not related to the cause of the initial hospital admission. The hospital field argues that the Hospital Readmissions Reduction Program (HRRP), authorized by the Affordable Care Act (ACA), is overly stringent and does not account for readmissions that occur outside of their clinical control. A growing body of evidence supports the theory that socioeconomic factors play a huge role in readmissions. Income and education levels, access to healthy and affordable foods, and reliable transportation are just some of the determinants affecting patients' recovery and/or potential return to the hospital. Current legislation introduced in the House and Senate (S.688/H.R. 1343 – Establishing Beneficiary Equity in the Hospital Readmission Program Act of 2015) would require the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to apply an adjustment for these factors, as well as an adjustment for the hospital's proportion of dual-eligible patients. Dual-eligible patients are those who qualify for Medicare and Medicaid. Such patients often present with the most complex conditions and are, by definition, economically-challenged..

STATE UPDATE: Insurance Exchange Rates for 2016

The New York State Department of Financial Services recently released the approved premium rate changes for plans selling insurance on the New York State of Health insurance marketplace. Premiums will rise an average of 7.1 percent for 2016. Some insurers requested significantly higher rate increases, including UnitedHealth Group, which sought a 22 percent premium hike. The state approved an increase of 1.7 percent.

The 2015 enrollment season, which ended February 28, 2015, saw an enrollment of 2.1 million New Yorkers in the individual marketplace and 14,628 employees and dependents enroll for coverage through the small business marketplace. According to the [New York State 2015 Open Enrollment Report](#), nearly three-quarters of enrollees qualified for Medicaid coverage and 89 percent of individuals were uninsured when they completed their New York State marketplace application.

The third open enrollment season for the New York State of Health marketplace begins November 1, 2015 and concludes January 31, 2016. On Long Island, the Nassau-Suffolk Council, one of the local hospital associations that is part of the Suburban Hospital Alliance of New York State, is one of the three state-appointed navigator agencies serving the region. The Hudson Valley region is serviced by the Community Service Society of New York, Maternal Infant Services Network of Orange, Sullivan, and Ulster Counties and the Westchester County and Rockland County Departments of Health.

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