

**Volume 6 No. 12**

**May 1996**

**TO:** Hospital Providers

**SUBJECT:** Implementation of the Medicaid Eligibility Verification System (MEVS)

**PURPOSE:** To inform hospital providers of a new method for obtaining eligibility information for the New Jersey Medicaid and Pharmaceutical Assistance to the Aged and Disabled (PAAD) programs.

**BACKGROUND:** Currently, providers may obtain eligibility information via telephone inquiry to Unisys through the Recipient Eligibility Verification System (REVS), by accessing a copy of the eligibility file housed at Medicaid Eligibility Verification System (MEVS) vendors, and by examining the Medicaid or PAAD Identification Card. In addition, certain hospitals can inquire on-line to the State's Office of Telecommunications and Information Systems (OTIS) data center.

To improve the efficiency and accuracy of eligibility data inquiries, the Division of Medical Assistance and Health Services is expanding MEVS to include new vendors and to provide on-line access to the eligibility file at Unisys. As a result, Medicaid and PAAD providers can access the same eligibility data that is used by the State's fiscal agent to adjudicate claims. This optional method will supplement the use of the identification cards and REVS, and will replace the existing MEVS system. It will be an invaluable tool to utilize in the resolution of eligibility-related billing problems, either at the point-of-service or identified on a Remittance Advice document.

Using MEVS, a provider will be able to enter a beneficiary's ID number or certain other information into a personal computer or other electronic devices. This information will be electronically sent to Unisys Corporation utilizing the services of a MEVS vendor. The most recent eligibility information will be electronically returned to the provider. This process is similar to that used by retail stores to receive credit card verifications.

Upon implementation of the expanded MEVS, the only search criteria which providers may use to access eligibility information will be (1) the beneficiary's Medicaid or PAAD identification number or (2) the beneficiary's date of birth and Social Security number. These criteria differ from those currently in use for existing MEVS vendors. The inquiry methodology will be modified in the near

future to also include (1) the beneficiary's name and date of birth as well as (2) the name and Social Security number.

Eligibility information can be obtained for beneficiaries enrolled in Medicaid (fee-for-service or HMO enrolled) or PAAD. In addition, information is available for General Assistance beneficiaries that reside in the city of Newark . Residents of other localities that are enrolled in General Assistance will be added at a later date.

The period of eligibility inquiry cannot include more than ninety consecutive days, cannot begin more than twelve months in the past, and cannot extend beyond the end of the current month.

The advantages of the expanded MEVS include the following:

- The provider will receive the most current eligibility information on-line;
- It is less labor intensive than REVS;
- Vendors could incorporate MEVS into new or existing claims administration software.

You should note that:

- The system does not guarantee eligibility data. The Medicaid or PAAD Identification Card remains the only guarantee of eligibility.
- MEVS vendors will charge providers for this system while other methods are available at no cost to the provider.

When describing which service a beneficiary is entitled to, MEVS uses coverage codes. The attached desk guide is necessary to interpret which services are included with which coverage code.

MEVS was operational at Unisys on February 28, 1996. Several contracts with MEVS vendors have been signed and more are expected over the next several months. Some MEVS vendors have begun marketing their services to New Jersey providers.

With the implementation of the expanded MEVS, access to the State of New Jersey's Medicaid Eligibility System files at OTIS will be terminated. Since the MEDQ and MEIQ on-line applications are part of this system, effective June 30, 1996, access to eligibility data through MEDQ and MEIQ will be terminated. The existing MEVS vendors have already been approved to participate under the new system and the State will work with all MEVS vendors to facilitate a seamless transition.

**ACTION:** If you have a contract with a MEVS vendor, please contact them to ascertain the status of your contract under the expanded system. Hospitals that utilize the MEDQ and MEIQ applications should investigate alternative methods of obtaining eligibility information. If you are interested in exploring the benefits of a MEVS subscription, the Office of Beneficiary and Provider Services can provide you with a current list of the approved vendors. Their telephone number is (609) 588-2933.

If you are interested in contracting with a MEVS vendor, you might consider the following criteria, among others, in selecting the company:

- a. What equipment will be needed?
- b. Is a separate phone line necessary?
- c. Will the needed software be incorporated into my existing software?
- d. What is the cost of the basic system and the optional features?
- e. What will be the cost of each transaction?
- f. What constitutes a transaction?
- g. What amount of training will be provided?
- h. What is the response time of an inquiry ?
- i. What other services are offered by the vendor?
- j. What is the level of equipment and software maintenance provided?
- k. What is the level of customer support?

If you have any questions or would like to request a list of the current MEVS vendors, please contact the Office of Beneficiary and Provider Services at 609-588-2933.

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