

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES  
Health Care Financing Administration  
Center for Medicaid and State Operations  
7500 Security Boulevard Baltimore, MD 21244-1850  
September 13, 2000

Dear State Health Official:

I am writing to inform you of several improvements to the data reporting process for the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) and Medicaid. As you know, HCFA recently implemented a new web-based Statistical Enrollment Data System for States to report children's participation in SCHIP and Medicaid. This new system replaced the mainframe-based Statistical Information Management System (SIMS) through which States previously reported quarterly and annual enrollment data to HCFA.

You should already have received via email the attached memo ([Attachment 1](#)) explaining how to access the web-based system and download a users' guide. The users' guide provides detailed instructions for accessing the system, entering and submitting data, and creating reports. The enclosed manual ([Attachment 2](#)) provides additional information to guide you through the data-entry process.

In a State Health Official letter dated December 4, 1998, HCFA released a set of instructions and reporting forms to be used in entering data into SIMS. In working with the data subsequently reported by the States to SIMS, we became aware that States might be defining some enrollment measures differently from one another and that program statistics therefore might not be comparable across States. To improve our understanding of the definitions States were using, we asked State data administrators to answer a few questions about how they reported particular transactions (for example, disenrollment at the end of a quarter). Based on their responses and subsequent conversations with SCHIP administrators, we have clarified our earlier reporting instructions and refined our definitions, in an effort to ensure that the information we collect through the new quarterly reporting system is consistent across States and provides an accurate picture of States' programs. We hope that these changes will help clarify the purpose for which the information is being requested and make it easier for States to navigate the system.

The enclosed manual explains the rules for reporting enrollees, new enrollees, disenrollees, and enrollment months. For the most part, this manual clarifies, rather than explicitly changes, the earlier reporting instructions for SIMS, but the clarification may require your State to change how it has been reporting data. The manual also provides instructions for reporting certain

transactions that were not specifically mentioned in the previous instructions. For example, the new manual clarifies that children who were enrolled only through the last day of a quarter (disenrolled as of the first day of the next quarter) should be reported as disenrollees in the earlier quarter. In addition to clarifications of this sort, the new manual includes some explicit changes:

***States with retroactive eligibility are now asked to submit preliminary and final quarterly reports.*** In order to ensure that new enrollees are reported in the quarter in which their coverage became effective, we are now asking States with programs that allow retroactive eligibility to submit two reports for each quarter for those programs. The first (preliminary) report is due 30 days after the end of the quarter. The second (final) report is due 30 days after the end of the next quarter. The final report for a quarter will incorporate information about children who applied during the next quarter but whose coverage was retroactive to the earlier quarter. To submit a final report, States will need to "un-certify" the data submitted in the preliminary report, update the information, and then re-certify the report.

***New enrollees should now be reported under the service delivery system in which they were last covered during the quarter.*** Previously, we asked States to report new enrollees under the service delivery system in which they were first covered for basic services during the quarter. This instruction was at odds with the instructions for categorizing other enrollees and enrollment months. We have therefore revised the instructions pertaining to new enrollees, so that they--like children ever enrolled, disenrollees, and enrollment months--will be reported under the service delivery system in which they were last covered for basic services during the quarter.

***States are now asked to report the number of children enrolled at quarter's end.*** Our conversations with the SCHIP Technical Advisory Group (TAG) suggested that many States take a point-in-time count of enrollees for their own planning purposes. As this would be a useful statistic, we are now asking all States to report the number of children enrolled in each program on the last day of the quarter. We think that this will significantly improve our ability to report enrollment data in the same way that most States have been collecting it.

***States now have the option to footnote the data they submit.*** If States are

temporarily using definitions that differ from those specified in this manual or if they have other relevant information to add with respect to the data provided, they can use the new "narrative" button on the main screen of the web-based system to explain how their definitions differ from those in the manual. These footnotes will help HCFA and other users interpret the data correctly.

***States will soon have access to on-line help.*** The web-based system will soon have a new help feature that will allow users to access drop-down boxes containing definitions and reporting rules. Users will be able to click on any row or column heading and obtain specific rules for reporting data in that row or column.

In the interest of improving our understanding of children's participation in SCHIP and Medicaid, States should begin applying these new reporting rules as soon as possible. In order for HCFA to have a mechanism for displaying your State's data consistently throughout the next reporting year, we suggest that any changes to your systems be in place by January 30, 2001, the date the reports for the first quarter of fiscal year (FY) 2001 are due. However, we recognize that some States may need time to bring their systems into conformity with the new rules. Therefore, we will expect States to be in compliance with the new reporting rules no later than April 30, 2001, when the report for the second quarter of FY2001 is due. In the meantime, States should use the footnote option in the system to highlight any deviations from the reporting rules.

We hope that the new instructions are clear and complete, and we appreciate your efforts to update your systems to ensure accurate and consistent data. If you have any questions about the instructions, please contact Nancy Fasciano at (410) 786-7969 or "nfasciano@hcfa.gov."

Thank you for your commitment to the success of SCHIP. We look forward to our continuing work toward ensuring that low-income children have access to health care services.

Sincerely,

/s/

Timothy M. Westmoreland Director

Enclosures

cc: All HHS Regional Administrators

All HCFA Regional Administrators

All HCFA Associate Regional Administrators For Medicaid and State Operations

Lee Partridge, American Public Human Services Association

Brett Ewig, Association of State and Territorial Health Officials

Joy Wilson, National Conference of State Legislatures Matt Salo, National Governors'

Association