
FEHB Program Carrier Letter

All Carriers

U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Office of Insurance Programs

Letter No. 2001-19

Date: May 30, 2001

Fee-for-service [14] Experience-rated HMO [17] Community-rated HMO [18]

SUBJECT: Accreditation

Last year, we alerted you that we would expect you to begin seeking accreditation from a nationally recognized, independent organization in 2002. In this year's call letter, we further explained our accreditation expectations. HMOs with 500 or more FEHB enrollees will need to provide us with an accreditation business plan that includes timelines for seeking an accreditation decision. FFS/PPO plans also must submit a business plan that outlines steps toward achieving accreditation. Because the structure of FFS plans differs from that of HMOs, we are allowing FFS/PPO plans to consider incremental accreditation on a regional or modular basis. We encourage FFS/PPO plans to look at provider credentialing, utilization management, and other modules as first steps. However, our long-term goal is for FFS/PPO plans to achieve the broadest level of accreditation offered by accrediting organizations.

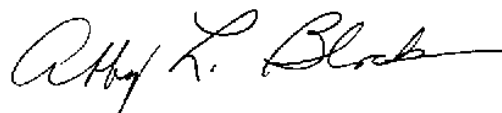
This letter clarifies which accrediting organizations we recognize and our recognition process.

We currently recognize three accrediting organizations for purposes of meeting our accreditation requirement: the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO), the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA), and URAC/American Accreditation HealthCare Commission. However, we remain open to considering recognition of other accrediting organizations. For the Fall 2001 Open Season, only JCAHO, NCQA, and URAC accreditation will be included in the FEHB Guide. However, we will allow plans to put the seal of other accrediting organizations on their brochures.

Our process for recognizing JCAHO, NCQA, and URAC involved meeting with the leadership of these organizations, learning the standards and requirements of each organization's accreditation process, including regular updates on changes or additions to each organization's accreditation requirements, and ensuring that patient safety standards were a part of the organization's program. Through this process, we were assured that the accreditation standards were broad based, rather than narrowly focused, and an indicator of a quality health plan or program.

If you have any questions about our accreditation expectations, please call Janet Pfleeger at (202) 606-0004.

Sincerely,



Abby L. Block
Assistant Director
for Insurance Programs