



Statement To
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON VITAL AND HEALTH STATISTICS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON STANDARDS

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Members of the Subcommittee, I am Gail Kocher, Director, Inter-Plan Programs at the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. I was also a co-chair of the Workgroup for Electronic Data Interchange (WEDIs) National Provider Identifier Outreach Initiative (NPIOI) during its tenure. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on WEDI's experience during the National Provider Identifier (NPI) implementation.

In June 2004, WEDI held a Policy Advisory Group (PAG) on the NPI, through which several recommendations were developed and sent to the Secretary. One specific recommendation from WEDI focused on the need for outreach and education, starting immediately in 2004 and ongoing through the rest of the implementation time frame. This need within the industry was further confirmed through the efforts of an informal coalition of healthcare professionals in early 2005, also highlighting the need for education and outreach on the NPI. In response, WEDI created the NPIOI in the fall of 2005 to address the outreach and education needs of the industry.

WEDI NPIOI Framework

Upon creation of the NPIOI, the mission and goals to support the mission were developed as the framework under which the NPIOI functioned. The goals were as follows:

- Establish a WEDI National NPI Resource Center Web site.
- Create standard and consistent messages on NPI.
- Serve as a coordinating body for the deployment of NPI-related education and outreach initiatives implemented at the national, regional and local level.
- Empower industry collaboration by engaging key industry stakeholders to participate in and contribute to the programs and deliverables that support the outreach and awareness strategies.
- Collect and disseminate readiness assessment information.
- Identify outreach and awareness methodologies for the dissemination of NPI messages, emphasizing those mechanisms that reach out to remote areas and hard to reach providers.
- Identify the educational scope and approach for programs aimed primarily to providers.
- Consolidate and coordinate resources and tools from WEDI members to support the educational programs developed by NPIOI.
- Identify key time frames for specific messages throughout the implementation phase.

The NPIOI was intended to run for a two year period, but remained intact another year through November 2008, several months after the NPI compliance date.

WEDI NPIOI Activities

In order to achieve the goals laid out above, the NPIOI established workgroups (WGs) to focus on Education and Content, Marketing and Outreach, Industry Readiness Assessment, and Resource Center development. Additionally, there was an NPI Implementation WG which created most of the white papers and issue briefs developed as resources for the industry. The NPI Implementation

WG also facilitated industry discussions in which best practices were shared and issues resolved.

NPIOI achieved its goals over the course of the three years of its existence, and this is evidenced by the following outcomes of the initiative:

- Hosted seven industry forums on NPI with a combined attendance of close to 1000.
- Offered seventeen recorded audio casts which reached over 2000 registrants plus an unknown number of other listeners
- Published fifteen white papers on NPI specific issues along with NPI issue briefs that focused on key summary planning and implementation issues
- Developed a tool kit with templates and other resources
- Developed a NPI contingency plan repository
- Conducted seven industry readiness assessments and testified to the NCVHS on three occasions on the findings
- Coordinated the WEDI NPI Hearings held in 2006
- Collaborated with key industry stakeholders on:
 - NPI slogans and outreach efforts (with CMS)
 - NPI entry level free education program (with BCBSA)

The NPIOI industry forums were the basis for the ongoing interactive forums that WEDI continues to hold today for 005010 and ICD-10 implementations, bringing stakeholders together to educate, share, and collaborate to result in a more successful implementation.

Conclusion

WEDI believes that many of the lessons learned through NPI implementation by the industry and specifically the approach and experience of the NPIOI can be applied as the National Health Plan ID is developed and ultimately implemented. All of the activities and products discussed in the previous section were a result of the following key lessons learned:

- Education and outreach is critical for all stakeholders.
- Education and outreach must begin upon adoption of and ongoing throughout the entire implementation of the National Health Plan ID.
- Education and outreach messaging must be consistent industry-wide.
- Stakeholders must communicate and work collaboratively throughout the implementation process.

WEDI looks forward to partnering with the Department of Health and Human Services, especially with the staff of the Office of E-Health Standards and Services, as well as the industry as a whole to facilitate a successful transition to the use of the National Health Plan Identifier.

Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify.