

Tribal Technical Advisory Group

to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

National Indian Health Board 101 Constitution Ave NW, #8B02 Washington, DC 20001 (202) 742-4262 (202) 742-4285 fax www.nihb.org

July 22, 2004

Mr. Brady Augustine
Senior Advisor
Center for Medicare Management (CMM)
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
7500 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21244-1850

Re: Open Door Forums

Dear Mr. Augustine,

I write to you in your capacity as a member of the CMS Team comprised to work with the Tribal Technical Advisory Group (TTAG) on Medicare issues relating to American Indians/Alaska Natives (AI/AN). The TTAG has been informed that CMS will schedule a telephone Open Door Forum to answer Indian health-related questions about Medicare Part D proposed regulations after they are published for public comment. The TTAG is concerned about Part D and other new programs established by the Medicare Modernization Act specifically regarding how they will be implemented in Indian communities. We have developed a series of documents to identify some of these issues and provided policy recommendations for ways CMS can make Medicare more accessible for AI/ANs.

These issues are complex. Tribes must view these policies from multiple perspectives because of the diverse roles they play in providing and purchasing health care services as well as acting as beneficiary advocates for patients and tribal members.

Because of the breadth of these responsibilities, we believe that a single open door forum will unnecessarily confuse issues rather than clarify them. Additionally, we anticipate a large turnout for any AI/AN specific Open Door Forums on Medicare Part D, as evidenced by the significant number of individuals present for the Open Door Forum on the Interim Drug Card Benefit for ITU Pharmacies held on May 17, 2004. Therefore we ask that a series of forums be scheduled to provide the opportunity to focus discussions on specific topics. This will allow both CMS and tribes to schedule the most appropriate staff to participate in each call.

The topic areas we are proposing are:

- Part C
- Part D – Provider Issues
- Part D – Beneficiary and Enrollment Issues
- Part D and Dual Medicare/Medicaid Eligibles

We know that the timeline for organizing these forums is very short, since we understand that publication of the proposed Part D rules is imminent. Because of the urgency of these issues, we would like to discuss and decide on the dates as soon as possible. Please expect a follow-up call

from Kris Locke, who is a tribal technical advisor for the TTAG, or don't hesitate to call me to discuss this further.

We appreciate the opportunity to work with CMS to develop a better understanding of how the Medicare Modernization Act can improve access to Medicare for AI/AN.

Sincerely,



Valerie Davidson
Chair, CMS Tribal Technical Advisory Group
Executive Vice-President,
Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation

cc: Dorothy Dupree
Linda Brown
TTAG Members, Alternates, Technical Advisors