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(1) The date on which the accreditation organization is approved by CMS.

(2) The date the MA organization is accredited by the accreditation organization.

(d) *Obligations of deemed MA organizations.* An MA organization deemed to meet Medicare requirements must—

(1) Submit to surveys by CMS to validate its accreditation organization's accreditation process; and

(2) Authorize its accreditation organization to release to CMS a copy of its most recent accreditation survey, together with any survey-related information that CMS may require (including corrective action plans and summaries of unmet CMS requirements).

(e) *Removal of deemed status.* CMS removes part or all of an MA organization's deemed status for any of the following reasons:

(1) CMS determines, on the basis of its own investigation, that the MA organization does not meet the Medicare requirements for which deemed status was granted.

(2) CMS withdraws its approval of the accreditation organization that accredited the MA organization.

(3) The MA organization fails to meet the requirements of paragraph (d) of this section.

(f) *Enforcement authority.* CMS retains the authority to initiate enforcement action against any MA organization that it determines, on the basis of its own survey or the results of an accreditation survey, no longer meets the Medicare requirements for which deemed status was granted.

[63 FR 35082, June 26, 1998, as amended at 65 FR 40323, June 29, 2000; 65 FR 59749, Oct. 6, 2000; 70 FR 4724, Jan. 28, 2005]

EFFECTIVE DATE NOTE: At 70 FR 52026, Sept. 1, 2005, in § 422.156, paragraph (b)(7) was suspended, effective September 1, 2005 through January 1, 2006.

§ 422.157 Accreditation organizations.

(a) *Conditions for approval.* CMS may approve an accreditation organization with respect to a given standard under this part if it meets the following conditions:

(1) In accrediting MA organizations, it applies and enforces standards that are at least as stringent as Medicare

requirements with respect to the standard or standards in question.

(2) It complies with the application and reapplication procedures set forth in § 422.158.

(3) It ensures that:

(i) Any individual associated with it, who is also associated with an entity it accredits, does not influence the accreditation decision concerning that entity.

(ii) The majority of the membership of its governing body is not comprised of managed care organizations or their representatives.

(iii) Its governing body has a broad and balanced representation of interests and acts without bias.

(b) *Notice and comment*—(1) *Proposed notice.* CMS publishes a notice in the FEDERAL REGISTER whenever it is considering granting an accreditation organization's application for approval. The notice—

(i) Announces CMS's receipt of the accreditation organization's application for approval;

(ii) Describes the criteria CMS will use in evaluating the application; and

(iii) Provides at least a 30-day comment period.

(2) *Final notice.* (i) After reviewing public comments, CMS publishes a final FEDERAL REGISTER notice indicating whether it has granted the accreditation organization's request for approval.

(ii) If CMS grants the request, the final notice specifies the effective date and the term of the approval, which may not exceed 6 years.

(c) *Ongoing responsibilities of an approved accreditation organization.* An accreditation organization approved by CMS must undertake the following activities on an ongoing basis:

(1) Provide to CMS in written form and on a monthly basis all of the following:

(i) Copies of all accreditation surveys, together with any survey-related information that CMS may require (including corrective action plans and summaries of unmet CMS requirements).

(ii) Notice of all accreditation decisions.

(iii) Notice of all complaints related to deemed MA organizations.

(iv) Information about any MA organization against which the accrediting organization has taken remedial or adverse action, including revocation, withdrawal or revision of the MA organization's accreditation. (The accreditation organization must provide this information within 30 days of taking the remedial or adverse action.)

(v) Notice of any proposed changes in its accreditation standards or requirements or survey process. If the organization implements the changes before or without CMS approval, CMS may withdraw its approval of the accreditation organization.

(2) Within 30 days of a change in CMS requirements, submit to CMS—

(i) An acknowledgment of CMS's notification of the change;

(ii) A revised cross-walk reflecting the new requirements; and

(iii) An explanation of how the accreditation organization plans to alter its standards to conform to CMS's new requirements, within the time-frames specified in the notification of change it receives from CMS.

(3) Permit its surveyors to serve as witnesses if CMS takes an adverse action based on accreditation findings.

(4) Within 3 days of identifying, in an accredited MA organization, a deficiency that poses immediate jeopardy to the organization's enrollees or to the general public, give CMS written notice of the deficiency.

(5) Within 10 days of CMS's notice of withdrawal of approval, give written notice of the withdrawal to all accredited MA organizations.

(6) Provide, on an annual basis, summary data specified by CMS that relate to the past year's accreditation activities and trends.

(d) *Continuing Federal oversight of approved accreditation organizations.* This paragraph establishes specific criteria and procedures for continuing oversight and for withdrawing approval of an accreditation organization.

(1) *Equivalency review.* CMS compares the accreditation organization's standards and its application and enforcement of those standards to the comparable CMS requirements and processes when—

(i) CMS imposes new requirements or changes its survey process;

(ii) An accreditation organization proposes to adopt new standards or changes in its survey process; or

(iii) The term of an accreditation organization's approval expires.

(2) *Validation review.* CMS or its agent may conduct a survey of an accredited organization, examine the results of the accreditation organization's own survey, or attend the accreditation organization's survey, in order to validate the organization's accreditation process. At the conclusion of the review, CMS identifies any accreditation programs for which validation survey results—

(i) Indicate a 20 percent rate of disparity between certification by the accreditation organization and certification by CMS or its agent on standards that do not constitute immediate jeopardy to patient health and safety if unmet;

(ii) Indicate any disparity between certification by the accreditation organization and certification by CMS or its agent on standards that constitute immediate jeopardy to patient health and safety if unmet; or

(iii) Indicate that, irrespective of the rate of disparity, there are widespread or systematic problems in an organization's accreditation process such that accreditation no longer provides assurance that the Medicare requirements are met or exceeded.

(3) *Onsite observation.* CMS may conduct an onsite inspection of the accreditation organization's operations and offices to verify the organization's representations and assess the organization's compliance with its own policies and procedures. The onsite inspection may include, but is not limited to, reviewing documents, auditing meetings concerning the accreditation process, evaluating survey results or the accreditation status decision making process, and interviewing the organization's staff.

(4) *Notice of intent to withdraw approval.* If an equivalency review, validation review, onsite observation, or CMS's daily experience with the accreditation organization suggests that the accreditation organization is not

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meeting the requirements of this subpart, CMS gives the organization written notice of its intent to withdraw approval.

(5) *Withdrawal of approval.* CMS may withdraw its approval of an accreditation organization at any time if CMS determines that—

(i) Deeming based on accreditation no longer guarantees that the MA organization meets the MA requirements, and failure to meet those requirements could jeopardize the health or safety of Medicare enrollees and constitute a significant hazard to the public health; or

(ii) The accreditation organization has failed to meet its obligations under this section or under § 422.156 or § 422.158.

(6) *Reconsideration of withdrawal of approval.* An accreditation organization dissatisfied with a determination to withdraw CMS approval may request a reconsideration of that determination in accordance with subpart D of part 488 of this chapter.

[63 FR 35082, June 26, 1998, as amended at 65 FR 40323, June 29, 2000; 65 FR 59749, Oct. 6, 2000]

§ 422.158 Procedures for approval of accreditation as a basis for deeming compliance.

(a) *Required information and materials.* A private, national accreditation organization applying for approval must furnish to CMS all of the following information and materials. (When reapplying for approval, the organization need furnish only the particular information and materials requested by CMS.)

(1) The types of MA plans that it would review as part of its accreditation process.

(2) A detailed comparison of the organization's accreditation requirements and standards with the Medicare requirements (for example, a crosswalk).

(3) Detailed information about the organization's survey process, including—

(i) Frequency of surveys and whether surveys are announced or unannounced.

(ii) Copies of survey forms, and guidelines and instructions to surveyors.

(iii) Descriptions of—

(A) The survey review process and the accreditation status decision making process;

(B) The procedures used to notify accredited MA organizations of deficiencies and to monitor the correction of those deficiencies; and

(C) The procedures used to enforce compliance with accreditation requirements.

(4) Detailed information about the individuals who perform surveys for the accreditation organization, including—

(i) The size and composition of accreditation survey teams for each type of plan reviewed as part of the accreditation process;

(ii) The education and experience requirements surveyors must meet;

(iii) The content and frequency of the in-service training provided to survey personnel;

(iv) The evaluation systems used to monitor the performance of individual surveyors and survey teams; and

(v) The organization's policies and practice with respect to the participation, in surveys or in the accreditation decision process by an individual who is professionally or financially affiliated with the entity being surveyed.

(5) A description of the organization's data management and analysis system with respect to its surveys and accreditation decisions, including the kinds of reports, tables, and other displays generated by that system.

(6) A description of the organization's procedures for responding to and investigating complaints against accredited organizations, including policies and procedures regarding coordination of these activities with appropriate licensing bodies and ombudsmen programs.

(7) A description of the organization's policies and procedures with respect to the withholding or removal of accreditation for failure to meet the accreditation organization's standards or requirements, and other actions the organization takes in response to non-compliance with its standards and requirements.

(8) A description of all types (for example, full, partial) and categories (for example, provisional, conditional, temporary) of accreditation offered by the organization, the duration of each type