

News Release

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NMMRA Passes Federal Performance Review – Merits Noncompetitive Three-year Renewal as New Mexico’s Quality Improvement Organization

Albuquerque, NM – The state’s Medicare health care Quality Improvement Organization (QIO), the New Mexico Medical Review Association (NMMRA), was officially notified this week by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) that the federal government intends to enter into a new three-year contract with NMMRA as the Medicare QIO for New Mexico. In a letter to NMMRA Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Dan Jaco, the director of the CMS Office of Clinical Standards and Quality, Barry Straube, MD, wrote, “We are pleased to inform you that [NMMRA] achieved a level of performance that met or exceeded published standards for each contract task, making it eligible for non-competitive renewal.” Straube additionally noted that “this letter serves as notification ... of CMS’ intention to renew the subject contract.”

“I find it particularly gratifying to learn that NMMRA's continuous efforts to improve health care in the state have been recognized and are valued by CMS and that NMMRA will continue in its role as a key health care resource within this state,” said Randy Marshall, executive director of the New Mexico Medical Society and a member of NMMRA's Board of Directors.

NMMRA was awarded this nearly \$8.5 million contract effective November 1, 2005, and has been working on a number of quality improvement projects in the areas of hospitals, physician offices, nursing homes, home health agencies and more recently with health plans and pharmacists. In addition, NMMRA maintains a statewide, seven-day-a-week help line for Medicare beneficiaries and their families to ask for quality-of-care reviews and to handle appeals related to discharges from hospitals and discontinuation of coverage determinations related to hospital, home health and nursing home care.

“In my more than 20 years’ experience working with federal peer review and quality improvement contracts, this was by far the most challenging contract,” said Jaco. “The fact that 25 percent of such contractors around the country have thus far failed the evaluation highlights the complexity of the work and at the same time highlights the stellar performance of the NMMRA staff.”

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New Mexico Medical Review Association



In addition to having to achieve improvement on an array of evidence-based performance measures, NMMRA was also evaluated independently by CMS in terms of provider satisfaction with the assistance NMMRA gave to health entities in the state. NMMRA scored well in every category and had the highest score in the country in terms of its work with physician offices and cultural competence.

Joie Glenn, RN, MBA, CAE, executive director of the New Mexico Association for Home and Hospice Care, one of NMMRA's many partners in improving health care quality, congratulated NMMRA for this achievement saying, "It is not at all surprising to me that NMMRA under Dan Jaco's leadership and his well-qualified staff would score high in the nation. I look forward to our continuing partnership."

The New Mexico Hospital Association (NMHA) is another NMMRA partner. Upon learning about NMMRA's contract results, Jeff Dye, NMHA's president and CEO, responded, "We are very pleased to learn of NMMRA's well-deserved performance review and contract renewal with CMS. NMMRA is a vital partner with our association and our member hospitals as we all strive to deliver the best possible health care and health outcomes to New Mexicans."

The NMMRA staff is currently working on the set of proposals that will form the major content of the new contract, slated to begin August 1, 2008. In the upcoming contract, NMMRA anticipates conducting continuing projects in prevention, patient safety, disparities and beneficiary protection within communities in the state across the continuum of care.

NMMRA is an Albuquerque-based, non-profit, physician-sponsored organization. Serving as a resource to the state's health care community and to Medicare beneficiaries, NMMRA seeks to fulfill its mission to facilitate demonstrable and continuous improvement in the quality of health care and achieve its vision to be a premier and innovative leader in improving health care. NMMRA has served continuously as the state's only federally contracted Medicare QIO since 1984. NMMRA also serves as the state's Medicaid External Quality Review Organization.

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