

The Advisor

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Monthly Musings

By Sarah Hanna, CEO

The Shortage of 2022

The Great Reshuffling, The Great Resignation, the Great Revaluation. These are some of the terms that are being used when naming the labor shortage employers have been experiencing. But whatever catchphrase is selected to describe this challenging time it doesn't ease the pain that is associated with it. Tack on Covid related absences to the list of struggles and the uphill battle of running a business continues into 2022. One of my executive team members quoted a meme she saw during a meeting: "2021 went home, put on a wig, and came back as 2022." When she made the comment, I admit I giggled but the fact of the matter is that the situation isn't funny.

During such times, we rely heavily on our loyal staff. We put more responsibilities and hours on them and through it all, they show up daily working diligently to accomplish their tasks as best they can. These experiences bring out the best in people and their true character shines. I have seen my team come together, develop plans to shift with the landscape, and push forward all the while focusing on the needs of the company and clients. I have been inspired by their commitment and perseverance. I'm sure you have witnessed similar circumstances.

Don't get me wrong have we made mistakes along the way? Yes. When those errors happen, I have had to draw heavily on patience and grace. I have also appreciated the same from clients and employees. Thank goodness for forgiveness and understanding.

As we make our way further into 2022 and to help navigate the continual pandemic terrain; focus on each task individually to prevent overwhelm, learn from mistakes, keep trying new ideas, listen to those by your side, and collaborate to work towards meeting the needs of your employees and customers. Together we can turn this wig-wearing year into the belle of the ball.

Till next time...



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Team Member Spotlight

ECS North is excited to introduce you to a fundamental part of our team, Season Henderson. She has been with ECS North since January of 2016.

Season joined the ECS North team as an experienced Biller and was promoted to Account Manager. As a team member, her focus is to use her industry knowledge to work and generate revenue for our clients. Through her experiences collaborating with multiple clients, she continued to grow in her position. This has allowed the executive team to utilize Season on various clients and billing systems over the years.

Season attended Scottsdale Community College in Scottsdale, AZ, and resides in Arizona with her family raising her three kids; Anaya, 18, Dustin, 13, and Lily Belle, who is 10. There are various outdoor activities in her area as she stays busy even in her spare time hiking and bike riding with her family. At times, seasonal weather in Arizona keeps her inside due to the heat.

She enjoys reading and catching up on popular TV shows while cuddling with her golden-haired chihuahua puppy named "Sox." Season always looks forward to traditions. One is making Christmas ornaments with her family. Outside of the traditional crafty decorations, she and her family always want to learn something new and different. This year the ornaments involved wood-burning; they really enjoyed learning the "how-to," and next year it will be something even better.

Over the past few years, people have struggled with career, health, and family; Season has used and continues to work on her Vision Boards to keep herself positive.

Using her creative ideas and outside encouragement from others to visually display her thoughts and ideas is something she enjoys. She does make sure to take time, open her mind, organize her thoughts, and appreciate the goals she sets for herself and her family. Season works remotely from her home office and continues to do a fantastic job managing her family and career. When not working in an office/structured environment with other employees, this is a necessity. With that, Season loves the camaraderie with the ECS North Staff. Sarah Hanna, the CEO, created a team-building committee to keep the staff (no matter the location) connected while working in separate states/coast to coast. Communication during and after-hours is essential to the cohesiveness of the team members. Season expressed this in her favorite quote below.

"Coming together is a beginning, keeping together is progress, and working together is a success."



Season Henderson
Account Manager

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Tips from the Team

The Effects of a Mismanaged Deductible Season

Happy New Year! What a better time to re-visit front end staff training, patient resources and patient education/communication. As the current year ends, eligibility is a step that providers cannot afford to skip. The opportunity presents itself in a few ways to include during a home assessment/equipment set-up, contacting customer service to make a payment, order supplies or general support inquiries.

Lost revenue, upset referrals and frustrated patients will be inevitable along with denials that could have been prevented. Failure to collect at the time of service is costly as the ability to collect can decrease significantly after the patient walks out of the showroom.

A company-wide policy should be available and include specifically instructions on the deductible season to ensure your employees and your patients are on the same page.

Reach out if your staff needs support as we head into the new year.

"Motivation is the desire to act in service of a goal. It's the crucial element in setting and attaining our objectives."

-Psychology Today



Abbey Luzader
Senior Account Manager

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2022 General Updates

OWENS & MINOR BUYS APRIA

Industry changes coming into 2022 include Owens & Minor which is owned Byram Healthcare (purchased in 2017) buying Apria stock and will close the first part of this year. The acquisition expands its Patient Direct platform, increases payer relationships, and opens up room for growth. Catch up on the details below.

[Owens & Minor buys Apria, reaches deeper into home care | HME News](#)

Medical Device Shortages

The FDA publishes this device shortages list to provide transparency to the American public, particularly those who use or purchase medical devices. Click the link below last updated by the FDA 1/7/2022

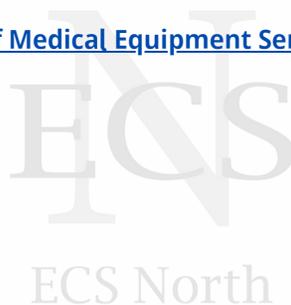
[Medical Device Shortages During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency | FDA](#)

OAMES Receives Promising News on ARPA Relief Funding for HME Providers

After months of efforts by OAMES, it appears HME providers will be receiving relief as part of Ohio's funding portion of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) for home and community-based service (HCBS) providers. The news was discussed during a call on Friday with the Governor's office and Directors from the four-state agencies involved.

For additional information reach out to kam@oames.org

[OAMES | Welcome to the Ohio Association of Medical Equipment Services](#)



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Medicare DME Final Rule

As reported earlier this month, CMS has released the long-awaited Medicare DMEPOS Final Rule (CMS-1738-F, CMS-1687-F, and CMS-5531-F). You can read the Final Rule [here](#) and reference the Fact Sheet [here](#).

This includes provisions regarding the application of Medicare Competitive Bidding Program (CBP) payment rates that will go into effect at the end of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE):

- For rural and non-contiguous areas, CMS will continue paying suppliers the 50/50 blend of adjusted and unadjusted fee schedule rates.
- For contiguous, non-rural areas, CMS will change to paying suppliers at 100 percent of the CBP adjusted fee schedule rates.
- For the former Competitive Bid Areas (CBAs), CMS will change to paying suppliers the single payment amounts (SPAs) established during the DMEPOS CBP updated by an inflation adjustment factor on an annual basis.

While this provided some relief to rural areas, it did not provide the full payment relief that was requested in other areas. It does make permanent the 50/50 blended payment rate for rural and non-contiguous areas. However, it fails to address the needs in other areas of the country by not continuing the current 75/25 blended payment rate for non-rural areas beyond the end of the COVID-19 PHE. It also does not adjust payment rates in former CBAs to reflect the significant increases in product and operational costs for suppliers since the last completed CBP round in 2015.

The final rule also discloses that CMS has decided to hold off on finalizing any changes to the HCPCS Code Application process. For now, they will continue to review the current system and consider changes in the future.

<https://www.cms.gov/newsroom/fact-sheets/medicare-durable-medical-equipment-prosthetics-orthotics-and-supplies-dmepos-final-rule-cms-1738-f>

CMS.gov

Having trouble finding the DME 2020 Fee Schedule and more, Follow the link below!

[DMEPOS Fee Schedule | CMS](#)

Audit Update-SMRC

The SMRC has added orthopedic footwear from January 1, 2019, through December 31, 2019, to the list of post-payment reviews. As a priority, please continue to forward all letters and documentation to ECS North based on the timeframe previously set. If questions arise, please reach out to your Senior Account Manager and/or Katie Schmidt. Click on the link below to view the applicable HCPCS's

[01-307 Orthopedic Footwear Notification of Medical Review - Noridian - SMRC \(noridiansmrc.com\)](#)

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Audit Volume Up!

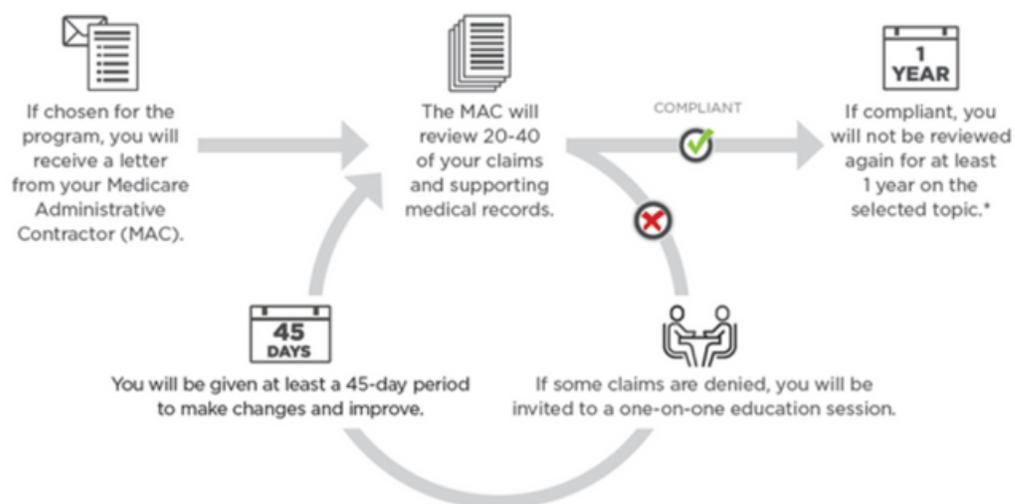
We are seeing an increase in audit activity across all payors, both Federal and commercial, and anticipate that this will likely continue in an upward manner as 2022 progresses. As such, we will need to reduce the timeline for audit responses. What does this mean to you? Going forward, audit submissions will occur two days prior to the due date – within the current business week. For example, if the due date is Friday, we will submit on Wednesday. However, if the due date falls on a weekend, the default due date will be Wednesday or Thursday of that same week.

We want to ensure that we are meeting all deadlines, as we do not want you miss out on appeal rights or be responsible for an overpayment because of a timeline issue. In instances when you are unable to obtain documentation by the timeline posted, please notify Katie Schmidt. In the event that you have the appropriate documentation on hand, please advise and we will submit the audit response upon receipt, to further expedite the process. Please reference email sent 1/20/2022.

Please reach out to Katie Schmidt with questions. A conference call can be set up to discuss in more detail if needed.

Dont Forget How it Works!

How does it work?



**MACs may conduct additional review if significant changes in provider billing are detected*

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OHIO NEWS!

OAMES Receives Promising News on ARPA Relief Funding for HME Providers

After months of efforts by OAMES, it appears HME providers will be receiving relief as part of Ohio's funding portion of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) for home and community-based service (HCBS) providers. This incredible news was shared during a collaborative stakeholder call on Friday with the Governor's office and Directors from the four-state agencies leading this important work.

- Ohio initiated a multi-agency effort last summer to outline a plan for ARPA provider relief within the Ohio Department of Medicaid, Ohio Department of Aging, Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities and Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.
- At the same time, OAMES sent letters to Gov. DeWine and ODM leadership urging that Ohio's HME providers be included in the state's allocation of ARPA funds.
- In July, the four Ohio agencies submitted an initial funding projection to CMS.
- In August, the agencies collaborated to publish a "Request for Information" survey to gather stakeholder feedback receiving over 400 responses including OAMES' submission.
- On September 29, CMS requested additional details from the Ohio agencies.
- On October 13, Ohio submitted its detailed spending plan to CMS which was discussed at OAMES 40th Annual Meeting & Exhibition on Oct. 27. Ohio continued to submit additional information to CMS which has since received partial approval.
- OAMES continued follow-up with ODM to urge support for HME providers. In addition to the June letters and August survey submission, OAMES past president Nick Kalogeras provided OAMES' testimony at the 9/23/21 Joint Medicaid Oversight Committee (JMOC) hearing and OAMES executive director Kam Yuricich gave additional testimony at the 12/09/21 JMOC hearing on the urgent need for HME provider relief.
- Concurrent with agency efforts, HB 169 was passed by the Ohio General Assembly with provider relief components which give the State spending authority of the federal funds. The bill was signed into law by Gov. DeWine and effective on 12/23/2021 which in addition to other directives, appropriates \$529 million in immediate provider relief for HCBS approved as part of Ohio's CMS plan. Beyond ARPA funds, HB 169 grants additional relief for other providers including nursing and assisted living facilities, ICF/IID, hospice, and rural or distressed hospitals.

[OAMES.ORG](https://www.oames.org)

compliments of Kamela Yuricich, Executive Director



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Upcoming Events 2022

February 2-3:	ACMESA Winter Meeting, NC
February 15-16:	ADMEA, AL
March 10-11:	HFMA Women's Conference, SC
March 12-16:	NHIA, TN
March 16-17:	ATHOMES, TN
April 4-6:	Medtrade West, AZ
April 20-21:	Great Lakes, IN
April 22-23:	PAMs, PA
April 26-28:	MAMES, IA
June 13-15:	VGM Heartland, IA
September 19:	NEMEP Annual Conference, NY
October 24-26:	Medtrade East, GA
November 1-2:	OAMES, OH

