

ANESTHESIOLOGY ASSOCIATES
Driscoll Children's Hospital

October 1, 2009

Dr Charles E. Bell
Deputy Executive Commissioner for Health Services
Texas Health and Human Services Commission
4900 North Lamar
Austin, TX 78751

Dear Dr Bell:

The administrator of our pediatric anesthesiology group has brought an issue up to me that I think deserves your attention. In the Medicaid Provider Manual, pediatricians and OB-Gyn providers (among others) are exempt from having a Medicare provider number before acquiring a Texas Provider number and participating in Texas Medicaid. This certainly makes sense since these providers rarely see Medicare patients. I suggest to you that the same situation arises with pediatric specialists, especially pediatric anesthesiologists.

This past year, two members of our group had not billed any Medicare for a year, so their participation in Medicare was automatically dropped. This required a new complete application to CMS, a long wait for the number and then reinstatement to bill for Medicaid services. The total number of Medicare patients that our 10 member group bills for Medicare is around 60 per year. In any given year, a couple or more members may not have taken care of a dual enrolled patient. This creates financial hardship for the group and an unnecessary administrative burden on our staff. With the current shortage of pediatric specialists in the Medicaid program, this is another disincentive for participation. There is also a fairness issue involved- if pediatricians are exempt, why can't other pediatric specialists who devote all of their time to children also be exempt from this burdensome requirement?

I would ask on behalf of my group and all pediatric specialists in the State that this criterion requiring a Medicare number when providing for children in the Texas Medicaid system be deleted.

We are all committed to providing quality, accessible care to the children of Texas. I hope you will consider this a priority to improve children's access to specialty care.

Sincerely,



Mary Dale Peterson, M.D., M.H.A.

Cc: Helen Kent Davis, TMA
Dr. Pat Giam, President TSA
Carlene Rizzo, Administrator Anesthesiology Associates