

Related Change Request (CR) #: 3935

MLN Matters Number: MM3935

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Related CR Transmittal #: 608

Effective Date: January 1, 2006

Implementation Date: January 3, 2006

## *New Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) Modifier*

**Note:** This article was revised to contain Web addresses that conform to the new CMS website and to show they are now MLN Matters articles. All other information remains the same.

### Provider Types Affected

Physicians and critical access hospitals (which must be located in an HPSA) that provide services in health professional shortage areas and bill Medicare carriers and intermediaries for those services

### Provider Action Needed



#### **STOP – Impact to You**

For dates of service on or after January 1, 2006, a new modifier, **AQ**, replaces the two existing modifiers, **QB** and **QU**, for physician services provided in HPSAs.



#### **CAUTION – What You Need to Know**

Make certain that all HPSA services claims filed for dates of service on or after January 1, 2006 and where a HPSA modifier is required, use the correct **AQ** modifier. There will no longer be a distinction between physicians providing HPSA services in a rural area (**QB**) and physicians providing services in an urban HPSA (**QU**).



#### **GO – What You Need to Do**

See the *Background* and *Additional Information* sections of this article for further details regarding this Medicare Modernization Act (MMA) update.

#### Disclaimer

This article was prepared as a service to the public and is not intended to grant rights or impose obligations. This article may contain references or links to statutes, regulations, or other policy materials. The information provided is only intended to be a general summary. It is not intended to take the place of either the written law or regulations. We encourage readers to review the specific statutes, regulations and other interpretive materials for a full and accurate statement of their contents.

## Background

The two modifiers, QB and QU, currently used on claims qualifying for the HPSA bonus payments, will be deleted on January 1, 2006 and **one new modifier, AQ, created, for HPSA**. Claims with dates of service prior to January 1, 2006 must continue to use the current modifiers QB and QU.

Thus, for services rendered in zip code areas: 1) that do not fall within a designated full county HPSA; 2) are not considered to fall within the county based on a determination of dominance made by the United States Postal Service; or 3) are partially within a non-full county HPSA, the physician or CAH must still submit a QB or QU modifier to receive payment **for claims with dates of service prior to January 1, 2006**.

Effective for similar claims with dates of service on or after January 1, 2006, the modifier AQ, "Physician providing a service in a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA)," must be submitted.

## Implementation

The implementation date for this instruction is January 3, 2006.

## Additional Information

Within the official instructions issued by CMS are detailed instructions regarding services eligible for HPSA and physician scarcity bonus payments, HPSA incentive payments for services rendered in a critical access hospital (CAH), as well as HPSA designations and information regarding zip codes. The official instruction issued to your carrier and intermediary regarding this change may be found by going to <http://cms.hhs.gov/transmittals/downloads/R608CP.pdf> on the CMS website.

For additional information relating to this issue, please refer to your carrier/intermediary. To find their toll free phone numbers go to

<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNProducts/downloads/CallCenterTollNumDirectory.zip> on the CMS website.

Additional information on the HPSA bonus and the physician scarcity area bonus can be found at [http://www.cms.hhs.gov/HPSAPSAPhysicianBonuses/01\\_overview.asp](http://www.cms.hhs.gov/HPSAPSAPhysicianBonuses/01_overview.asp) on the CMS website.

The Guide for Using the HPSA/PSA Web Page can be viewed by going to <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/HPSAPSAPhysicianBonuses/Downloads/instructions.pdf> on the CMS website.

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