General Information, Eligibility, and Entitlement Manual

Chapter 7 - Contract Administrative Requirements

Table of Contents

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10 – Contracting and Subcontracting – Not yet available
20 – Publishing by Contractors and Restrictions on Promotional Activity – Not yet available
30 – Files Maintenance – Not yet available
40 –Shared System Maintainer and Medicare Contractor Responsibilities for System Releases)—Not yet available
40.1 – Claims Processing—Not yet available
40.2 – Release Software

40.2 – Release Software

(Rev. 5, 05-07-04)

CMS intends to continue to closely manage standard system software changes to assure that an effective change control process is in place. This means that maintainers must receive approval from their CMS system maintenance lead (see section VI) or CMS project officer before any follow-up release by the standard maintainer can be scheduled and installed.

Control of System Changes

All maintainers of the standard systems (CWF, FISS, APASS, MCS, VMS, GTEMS, and HPBSS systems) must use the same quarterly release schedule, i.e., on or about January 1, April 1, July 1, and October 1. The specific schedule for each quarterly release will be determined by CMS.

All follow-up release changes (except emergencies) to the quarterly schedule must be held and released on a predetermined schedule in coordination with CMS. Emergency changes may be released as problems are identified without prior approval. The schedule for follow-up release of changes must be forwarded to your CMS system maintenance lead or CMS project officer for prior approval.

Follow-up release changes are to be limited to the correction of priority 1 and 2 problems and errors that prevent effective operation of the production system. Priority 3, priority 4 and/or priority 5 problems may be corrected in a follow-up release when pre-approved by CMS. The CMS maintenance lead will advise you of the approval decision within 24 – 48 hours.

If a system problem is identified, Medicare organizations must submit documentation to their CMS system maintenance lead outlining the problem and the reason correction is needed at this time. Section V of this instruction outlines the minimum information required by CMS for approval.

Problem Priority Classifications for Follow-Up Releases

Listed below are CMS's problem priority classifications and examples. These are similar to the problem priority classifications that were used for the Y2K re-certification testing period.

> ***Priority 1 Classification***
> *Production:*
>
> *The problem prevents the accomplishment of a mission critical capability for which no acceptable workaround is known.**
>
> *This priority also includes problems where code must be fixed immediately in order for the normal production region functions or services to continue. For example, if the production region is down in a job resulting in an incomplete cycle or the system is pricing a significant volume of claims incorrectly causing over or under payment. The maintainer may make priority 1 changes on its own authority. These corrections must be reported to the CMS maintenance lead or to the project officer the next business day.*

Examples:

- *ABENDS on-line or batch (Inability to run a cycle)*
- *Inaccurate payment or no payment of claims (significant impact/high volume)*
- *Necessary file updates cannot be accomplished (payment files, history files)*
- *Interface failures affecting claims processing*

Beta/User Acceptance Testing:

The problem would prevent the accomplishment of a mission critical capability if the current test software is moved into the production environment. This priority also includes problems where code must be fixed immediately in order for the normal test region functions or services to continue. For example, if the test region is down in a job causing the cycle to not complete or the system is pricing claims incorrectly with a potentially significant claim volume or payment impact, the issue would be classified as a priority 1. The maintainer must work immediately to code a fix to be installed before moving the software into production.

Examples:

- *ABENDS; inability to run a cycle or test*
- *Inaccurate payment or no payment of claims (potentially significant impact)*
- *Necessary file updates cannot be accomplished (payment files, history files)*
- *Interface failures affecting test conditions*

Priority 2 Classification

Production:

The problem adversely affects the accomplishment of a mission critical capability so as to degrade performance and for which no acceptable work-around is known. This means the problem adversely affects the payment of benefits with a small claim volume or payment impact, the completion of CMS required reporting, or inaccurate information is being sent providers, beneficiaries or CMS. For example, if the information on an outgoing document to the provider community or Medicare Summary Notice is incorrect, the issue would be classified as a priority 2. The system maintainer must work with the CMS maintenance lead for approval to implement a fix.*

Examples:

- *Inaccurate payment or no payment of claims (small impact/low volume)*
- *Inaccurate CMS required report*
- *Inaccurate messages to the beneficiary, provider or CMS*
- *ABENDs with limited impact (ex. One contractor)*

Beta/User Acceptance Testing:

The problem would adversely affect the accomplishment of a mission critical capability so as to degrade performance if current test software is moved into the production environment. This means the problem adversely affects the payment of benefits with a potentially small claim volume or payment impact, the completion of CMS required reporting, or inaccurate information is being sent to providers, beneficiaries or CMS. For example, if the information on an outgoing document to the provider community is incorrect, the issue would be classified as a priority 2. The maintainer must work immediately to code a fix to be installed before moving the software into production.

Examples:

- *Inaccurate payment or no payment of claims (potentially small impact)*
- *Inaccurate CMS required report*
- *Inaccurate messages to the beneficiary, provider or CMS*

Priority 3 Classification

Production:

*The problem adversely affects the accomplishment of mission critical capability so as to degrade performance and for which an acceptable workaround is known.**

This means the problem could have significant impact but the work-around alleviates the impact. This allows the system maintainer adequate time to code a fix and sufficiently test before the corrected software is delivered for production installation. The system maintainer must work with the CMS maintenance lead to implement a fix.

Examples:

- *Impact of problem could be significant or minimal*
- *Problem correctable by contractor workaround**
- *ABENDs with an acceptable workaround**

Beta/User Acceptance Testing:

The problem would adversely impact the accomplishment of a mission critical capability so as to degrade performance if current test software is moved into the production environment.

*If moved into the production environment before correcting an acceptable workaround could be instituted to prevent the adverse impact.** The system maintainer must work immediately to code a fix to be installed before moving the software into production.*

Examples:

- *Potential impact of problem could be significant or minimal*
- *Problem affects CMS required reporting*

Priority 4 Classification

Production:

The problem is an operator inconvenience or annoyance, which does not affect a required mission essential capability. The system maintainer must request approval to code and implement a fix from its CMS maintenance lead.

Examples:

- *Problems affects non-mission critical functions*
- *Operational procedure with workload impact that should be automated*
- *Impact of problem is minimal*
- *Correctable by contractor workaround**

Beta/User Acceptance Testing:

*The problem is a test inconvenience or annoyance, which does not affect a required mission essential or test capability. If moved into the production environment before correcting, an acceptable workaround could be instituted to prevent the inconvenience.** The system maintainer should work immediately to code a fix to be installed before moving the software into production.*

Examples:

- *Problem affects non-mission critical functions*
- *Operational procedure with workload impact that should be automated*
- *Impact of problem is minimal*
- *Correctable by contractor workaround**

Priority 5 Classification

Production:

All other documented system problems. These could include operator errors, an inability to reproduce the reported problem, a problem with insufficient information, or documentation errors. The system maintainer should request approval from the CMS maintenance lead before coding and implementing any system enhancements.

Examples:

- *Contractor requested enhancements*
- *Documentation errors (i.e. Business requirements)*
- *Problem affects non-mission critical functions*
- *Minimal impact*

Beta/User Acceptance Testing:

All other documented system test problems. These could include operator errors, an inability to reproduce the reported problem, a problem with insufficient information, or test documentation errors. The system maintainer should work to correct these issues as soon as possible but any system enhancements should be discussed with the CMS maintenance lead.

Examples:

- *Test region or processing enhancements*
- *Test documentation errors (i.e. business requirements)*
- *Problem affects non-mission critical test functions*
- *Minimal impact*

** An acceptable workaround is a temporary alternative solution to a confirmed problem in the shared system that will insure the contractor is able to accomplish a mission critical capability. What makes the workaround "acceptable" is it must be agreeable to both the maintainer and contractor and does not cause an excessive burden to the contractor. If the maintainer and contractor cannot come to an agreement on what is "acceptable" the decision will be made by CMS.*

*** CMS does not recommend using workarounds in the test region in order to "pass" test cases. The institution of a workaround should be used in order to implement a CMS mandate where the system maintainer may not have time to adequately code a fix before the software is delivered for production installation.*

Routine File Maintenance/Updates

CMS does not require pre-approval or special documentation of routine file maintenance/updates or other routine activities necessary for effective operation of the Medicare system, Medicare processes and/or testing (e.g., MR/UR screen updates, provider and beneficiary file updates). All contractors and data centers should continue with their normal file maintenance routines.

Testing Prior to Installation of CMS Approved Follow-up Releases

CMS explains expectation for each Medicare organization's testing responsibility (i.e., standard system maintainer testing, contractor testing, CWF host testing, Beta testing).

Information Required for Requesting CMS Approval

The following must be submitted to the CMS maintenance lead or project officer when requesting that a problem be implemented in a follow-up release. If the system maintainer already has a process in place for communicating system problems to CMS, that process may be used as long as all information below, at a minimum, is captured.

MAINTAINER NAME:

Problem Description:
Brief non-technical business description of the fix.

How Found:
Explain how the problem was found. Also explain why you believe it was not found by release testing.

Problem Impact:
This information is needed to determine the scope of the problem in terms of payments, provider types, beneficiaries, number of potential claims impacted, it a work around is available, etc.

Problem Priority Classification:
Is this problem prioritized as an emergency, 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5.

Release Options:
Explain the options for scheduling and implementing the fix.

Technical Recommendation for Release timing:
Explain the recommended timing for installing the release.

CMS System Maintenance Leads

Maintainers must forward schedules and documentation of all changes as required in the memorandum to your CMS maintenance lead as indicated below. If your current process is to forward this information to your project officer, continue to do so. Your CMS maintenance leads will advise you of backup staff.