



THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20201

OCT 30 2007

Justine Handelman
BlueCross BlueShield Association
1310 G Street N.W.
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Ms. Handelman:

Thank you for your letter regarding issues raised by a number of organizations as to the timeframe for implementation of the International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision, also known as ICD-10.

As you know, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has been working with a number of HHS advisory groups for many years on the issues involved in transitioning from the current ICD-9 to the ICD-10 code set. As early as 1997, the National Committee for Vital and Health Statistics began studying the continuing viability of ICD-9 and assessing the implications of transitioning to ICD-10.

We are aware that the use of ICD-10 codes in electronic transactions is also dependent upon successful prior testing, adoption, and implementation of the later version (version 5010) of the current HIPAA ASC X12 transactions standards, and we continue to assess the timing and operational implications of implementing both ASC X12 version 5010 and ICD-10.

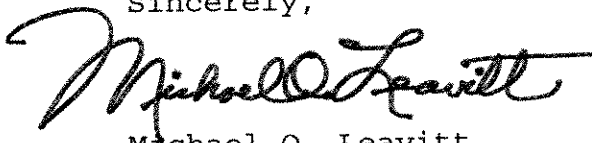
We agree completely with your assessment that education and outreach is critical to ensure that providers are aware of the changes that must be made to their systems and business processes. We trust that the payer community has also benefited from the lessons learned from the implementation of the first set of HIPAA transactions standards as well as the National Provider Identifier. The exhaustive efforts made by the Centers for

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Medicare & Medicaid Services in its outreach and education endeavors can be maximized by the support of the network of associations who signed your letter, when we prepare to implement the new version of the HIPAA transactions standards, followed by ICD-10.

I appreciate your thoughtful comments, and look forward to working with the organizations that participated in their development. Please share this information with them.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Michael O. Leavitt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "M" and a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Michael O. Leavitt