

Help Protect Home Oxygen Suppliers

Dear Colleague,

Please join us in protecting Home Oxygen Equipment suppliers by sending a letter to CMS, requesting that they delay the implementation of a recently released final rule that would cap Medicare reimbursements for home oxygen suppliers at 36 months which will hurt the quality of care Medicare patients receive.

CMS released this rule on October 30, 2008, and it is due to go into effect in January 1, 2009. This coincides with an across-the-board 9.5% cut in Medicare reimbursements to home oxygen suppliers that is also due to go into effect on January 1.

According to this new rule, suppliers will only be reimbursed for one 30-minute routine maintenance visit every 6 months after the 36-month period. Suppliers will not be reimbursed for emergency visits or the replacement of supplies associated with oxygen use, such as oxygen masks.

Home oxygen suppliers do more than just drop off equipment to a patient. Many suppliers, particularly smaller ones, have staff on call 24 hours a day to make home visits to repair equipment, drop off replacement supplies, and ensure that patients are receiving the proper amount of oxygen. Without adequate recognition of the services that home oxygen providers furnish, the quality of care that patients have come to expect will deteriorate, leading to an increase in the number of emergency room visits. This letter urges CMS to delay this rule until Congress is able to legislatively reform the Medicare policy as it is necessary to the survival of the Home Medical Equipment industry and the quality of care they provide to our nation's seniors. Please see attachment for full text of the letter.

If you would like to sign on to this letter or have any questions, please contact Erin Doty in Congressman Shuler's office at erin.doty@mail.house.gov (5-6401) or Emily Henehan in Congressman Tom Price's office at emily.henehan@mail.house.gov (5-9286).

Sincerely,

Heath Shuler
Member of Congress

Tom Price
Member of Congress