

III. PROVIDER EDUCATION AND RELATIONS

The contractor shall develop and implement, after receiving input from the Lead Agents and MTF Commanders, provider education and relations programs, in addition to the programs required by [OPM Part Two, Chapter 8, Section VIII](#). The program shall ensure that MTF and network providers understand TRICARE Prime and the TRICARE Extra requirements and that all providers in the Regions have ongoing access to information about the overall TRICARE Program to include the TRICARE quality and utilization review programs (see [OPM Part Three, Chapter 3, Section I. and II.](#)). The contractor shall also develop and implement, in coordination with the Lead Agents, a provider relations program, in conjunction with the education program, to establish and maintain effective communications. The final plans for provider education and provider relations shall be submitted through the Lead Agents to the Contracting Officer at least ninety (90) calendar days prior to the beginning of each health care delivery period. The adequacy of the provider education and relations programs shall be monitored by the contractor on a routine basis. The contractor shall identify and resolve provider relations issues within thirty (30) calendar days of identification. The requirements set forth below are in addition to those outlined in [OPM Part Two, Chapter 8](#).

A. Provider Education Program Components

Every six (6) months the contractor shall conduct educational seminars for MTF and network providers in each catchment and noncatchment area in which TRICARE Prime is established. The first round of seminars shall be completed within ninety (90) days following the start of health care services. In catchment areas, the contractor shall coordinate seminar development with the Lead Agents and MTF Commanders. All MTF and network providers shall be invited to an initial seminar prior to the start of TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Extra in their areas. The contractor shall also conduct annual provider conferences primarily designed to address concerns of non-network providers. In the first three (3) months following the first day of delivery of health care services, the contractor shall ensure that all network providers have either attended an educational seminar or, in some other manner, received complete instruction on the requirements of the program. On a routine basis thereafter, the contractor shall schedule educational seminars for new providers and providers expressing an interest in attending additional seminars. At no time shall a provider be in the contractor's network for more than six months without receiving instruction on program requirements. Components of the educational program for MTF and civilian providers shall include:

1. Distribution of Descriptive Material

The contractor shall prepare and distribute materials necessary in communicating program requirements to providers after receiving input from the Lead Agents and MTF Commanders. Descriptive materials should be tailored to MTF, network provider, and non-network provider needs, as appropriate. These materials should include policy and procedure handbooks, network listings, and benefit coverage for TRICARE Prime, TRICARE Extra and TRICARE Standard and TRICARE quality and utilization review programs (see [OPM Part Three, Chapter 3, Section I. and II.](#)). All provider materials, including written materials, briefings, and other methods of publicizing the program, as well as the identification of the media to be used, shall be submitted through the Lead Agent to the Contracting Officer for approval not later than ninety (90) calendar days prior to the

start of each health care delivery period, or when there is any proposed revision to the material. No provider materials may be released under any circumstances without prior Contracting Officer approval. The materials will be approved for a one (1) year period.

2. Policy and Procedure Changes

The contractor shall keep providers informed of program changes and developments through accurate communication of policies and procedures. All providers shall receive written notification of policy changes with clear delineation of provider responsibilities in implementing the program change.

3. Network Newsletters

The contractor shall provide routine information to MTF and network providers through network newsletters. These newsletters should address program and procedure issues pertinent to providers and shall contain all changes to the provider network for the provider's geographic area. These newsletters shall not replace the general quarterly provider bulletins to be sent to all providers. However, network provider information may be added to the quarterly newsletters as a supplement (see [OPM Part Three, Chapter 4, Section III.B.2.a.](#)). All newsletters shall be forwarded through the appropriate Lead Agent to the Contracting Officer for approval prior to release.

4. Network Updates

The contractor shall, not less than annually, forward current provider listings to network providers. Annually, the contractor shall forward a hard copy provider list to the Lead Agents and all MTF Commanders. Each quarter subsequent to the final approval of the Network Development Plan, the contractor shall provide the Lead Agents and all MTF Commanders an updated network provider list in an electronically readable ASCII format which can be accessed on an MS-DOS based personal computer.

5. Problem Resolution

The contractor shall use a portion of each educational seminar to invite providers to discuss any particular problems they face. Steps to be taken by the provider or the contractor to resolve these problems should be described during the seminar. Common misunderstandings about program requirements should be discussed in network newsletters.

6. Staffing

The contractor shall ensure that seminars are conducted by trained staff familiar with program requirements, contractor operations and provider needs.

B. Provider Relations Program Components

The provider relations program must be designed to encourage cooperation and communication between the contractor, the Lead Agents, the MTFs, and all civilian network and non-network providers. The contractor is responsible for facilitating MTF and network provider communication and for ensuring network provider satisfaction with the operation of TRICARE Prime and TRICARE Extra. The provider relations program shall be coordinated with the education program so that common provider issues can be identified and resolved. The contractor shall monitor the performance of the provider relations function through provider satisfaction surveys administered in a format and according to a

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time schedule approved by the Contracting Officer. Components of the provider relations program shall include:

1. Communications

The contractor is responsible for maintaining systems to provide responses to inquiries from civilian providers. These systems must include procedures for written and telephonic inquiry by provider offices. Written response must comply with the guidelines set forth in [OPM Part One, Chapter 1, Section III.](#) and [OPM Part Two, Chapter 8, Section III.](#) The contractor shall maintain provider-dedicated telephone lines which comply with the response levels set forth in [OPM Part Three, Chapter 4.](#)

2. Problem Resolution

The contractor shall provide problem detection and correction procedures. These procedures must interface with provider education, quality assurance, claims administration, and other key functions as appropriate to resolve specific issues and provide operational feedback.

3. Grievance Procedures

The contractor shall maintain a provider grievance process as described in [OPM Part Two, Chapter 8, Section V.](#)

4. Staffing

The contractor shall ensure that provider relations functions are performed by trained staff familiar with TRICARE Prime and TRICARE Extra requirements, contractor operations, and provider needs.

5. Provider Representatives

To perform the duties required in this section, and as explained and amplified in [OPM Part Two, Chapter 8,](#) the contractor shall provide full-time provider representatives as specified in the contract. The contractor may assign these and any other proposed representatives in the most effective manner to ensure coverage of the assigned Region. The TRICARE representatives shall be hired, trained, and located in their assigned geographic regions no later than thirty (30) calendar days prior to the start of health care delivery. The contractor shall provide timely reports of visits as required by [OPM Part Two, Chapter 8, Section VIII.C.](#) and [Section IX.C.3.](#)

