HIPAA - National Provider Identifier

Today, each health insurer or program issues an identification number to its health care providers, and providers doing business with multiple payers and programs often must maintain multiple provider identifiers. By May 23, 2007, almost all healthcare professionals will use a single National Provider Identifier (NPI) rather than the legacy numbers they use today to interact with health plans (like your 10-digit Arkansas Medicaid Provider number). The NPI will be a unique identification number assigned to health care providers by CMS (Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services). The NPI will have no imbedded intelligence, will be permanently assigned, and will be used by the provider to interact with all health plans for all HIPAA compliant transactions including payment.

Important notes concerning the NPI:

- Providers can already apply for an NPI
- Providers should visit https://nppes.cms.hhs.gov for enrollment information.
- Covered entities are required to obtain an NPI, but obtaining an NPI does not automatically make a provider a covered entity.
- Registration for an NPI does not automatically register a provider for any payers.
- Each health plan or insurer still maintains their own independent enrollment process and membership requirements.
- The NPI is anticipated to be a 10-digit number, with some payers requiring additional taxonomy codes for claim adjudication.
- Individual providers can only have one NPI.
- For pharmacies, the NPI will replace the DEA number of the prescribing physician
- Non-traditional providers (i.e. home health, environmental modification providers, or non-medical transportation) will not be allowed to register for an NPI and should look for guidance from their payers concerning their identification numbers.

There are many sources of information about the NPI available on the Web. The following are some excellent resources when seeking further information:

http://www.hipaadvisory.com/regs/finalprovid/ - an indexed site of the final NPI ruling
https://nppes.cms.hhs.gov – The enrollment site for providers
http://www.cms.hhs.gov/hipaa/hipaa2/regulations/identifiers/default.asp - The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid services’ Website for NPI information