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National Practitioner Data Bank—Healthcare Integrity and Protection Data Bank

NPDB-HIPDB Data Bank News

April 2003

Complete and Substantive Reports Improve Quality

The value of Data Bank information provided to querying entities is directly related to the completeness and quality of information submitted in reports.

Reporters: When submitting a report on a particular subject, it is important that you make every effort possible to ensure the report is clear to the reader. The Data Banks rely on you for complete and substantive information. On a daily basis, querying entities use your report information as an important supplement to comprehensive and careful review of a practitioner's professional credentials. Queriers rely on the information contained in reports to support their efforts to promote quality health care by ensuring they have the best health care providers.

What You Can Do: Read through your report before selecting **Submit to Data Bank(s)**, to verify that it contains complete and substantive information. Pay particular attention to the text entered in the Description of Act(s) or

Omission(s) or Other Reasons for Action Taken field. If this narrative does not adequately explain the circumstances of an action, your report may be found to be "legally insufficient" and you may be required to submit a narrative which is more explanatory. Also, check that all information in the report will make sense to queriers and report subjects. Subjects should be able to clearly understand the action reported so they can evaluate whether they need to add a Subject Statement or initiate a dispute of a report.

You should also avoid specifying "other" for categories for actions taken or bases for actions if an existing category describes the situation. Reports which improperly use "other" may also be subject to being considered "legally insufficient".

Thank you for doing your part to maintain the high quality of the information contained in the Data Banks. 🌿

Reporting Clinical Privileges Actions to NPDB and State Boards

Under current NPDB procedures, hospitals and other health care entities are required to submit adverse action reports on clinical privileges through the Integrated Querying and Reporting Service (IQRS) and mail a copy of each report to the appropriate State licensing board. This procedure furthers an important purpose of the NPDB legislation: to collect and disseminate reports as soon as possible as well as ensure that State licensing boards receive copies of adverse action reports in a timely fashion.

While this procedure has been in effect for many years, it does represent a change from the way the NPDB originally collected these reports.

When the NPDB began operations in 1990, adverse action reports were submitted using a paper-based system. Under this system, a health care entity would submit paper copies of a report to the State licensing board, which would then forward one copy of the report to the

See *NPDB Reporting* on page 5

Tracking and Downloading IQRS Query Responses

Did you know that you can track and download your query responses with just a few clicks of the mouse?

After logging into the IQRS and confirming your entity registration, select **Continue** to display the *Options* screen (Figure 1), where you may query, report, view query or report output, or maintain your subject database.

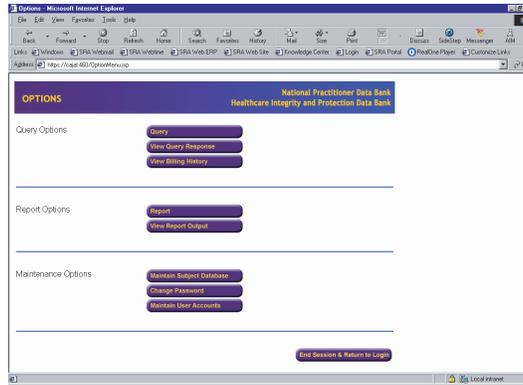


Figure 1. IQRS Options Screen

If you wish to view your query output, select **View Query Response** under the Query Options section. The *Query Status* screen will display the query responses for your entity. Responses are available electronically within an average of 4 to 6 hours of receipt of a query by the Data Bank(s). Under certain circumstances, additional processing time may be required.

Do not resubmit a query on the subject in question. **This will result in duplicate transaction processing and fees.** If you cannot view your query response within 2 to 3 business days after submission, contact the Data Banks' Customer Service Center at 1-800-767-6732 or npdb-hipdb@sra.com.

Tracking Your Query Status

Queries will be marked as follows:

- Pending: Queries that are Pending have not yet been fully processed.
- Rejected: The Data Bank(s) could not process the query due to an error. In

See *Query Responses* on page 4

Helpful Hints From The Data Banks

✓ LET PRACTITIONERS KNOW: USE THE REPORT RESPONSE SERVICE!

Are you requesting self-queries from practitioners? Inform any practitioners who would like to make statements or dispute any report generated by the Data Banks that the online Report Response Service is available to them at www.npdb-hipdb.com. If the report was generated on or after December 9, 2002, the *Notification of a Report in the Data Bank(s)* provides the practitioner with a password for access to the Report Response Service. If the report was generated prior to December 9, 2002, practitioners should call the Customer Service Center at 1-800-767-6732 for assistance. The Report Response Service can help ensure prompt

resolution of entity and practitioner disputes, allowing you to make a timely, informed accreditation, privileging, or credentialing decision.

✓ NUMBERS ON CHARGE RECEIPTS CAN HELP FACILITATE BILLING QUESTIONS!

Charge receipts, available on the *Billing History* screen, now contain the Billing Reference number used by the Data Banks. Use this number when contacting the Data Banks' Billing Department with questions on a billed transaction. For Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) users, this number directly corresponds with the billing code in the transaction statements you receive from your bank. While this is not the case with credit card users, using the Billing Reference number listed on the charge receipt to reference a billing question will help

facilitate communication with the Data Banks' Billing Department.

✓ CUTTING AND PASTING FROM MICROSOFT WORD? DISABLE YOUR "SMART QUOTE" FUNCTION!

If you use Microsoft Word to cut and paste information into the input screens for the IQRS, you will need to disable Microsoft Word's default setting for replacing straight quotation marks (") with smart quotes (") ("....") (includes, but may not be limited to the characters ['] and ["]). Currently, the Data Banks cannot successfully process the smart quote character; therefore, the Data Banks will reject any report containing this feature. The Data Banks are working to resolve this problem.

See *Helpful Hints* on page 4

Authorized Submitters Versus Authorized Agents

Many entities use authorized agents; however, eligible entities also must have an authorized submitter, who may or may not be an authorized agent.

Authorized Submitters

Each entity is responsible for selecting its authorized submitter; the submitter may change at any time. An authorized submitter is an individual empowered by a registered entity to certify the legitimacy of information provided in a query or report to the NPDB, the HIPDB, or both Data Banks. In most cases, the authorized submitter is an employee of the organization submitting the report or query, such as an administrator, a risk manager, or medical staff services personnel. Entities are not required to register the authorized submitter or to identify that person by name to the Data Banks, except at the time of a report or query submission. The NPDB-HIPDB does not assign Data Bank Identification Numbers (DBIDs) to individual authorized submitters; a DBID is assigned to the entity as an organization.

Authorized Agents

An outside organization that queries or reports to the Data Banks on an entity's behalf is referred to as an authorized agent. An authorized agent is generally an independent contractor used for centralized credentialing (e.g., a credentials verification organization [CVO]).

Hospitals and other eligible health care entities should ensure that certain guidelines are followed when designating an authorized agent to query or report on their behalf. The entity should establish a written agreement with an authorized agent confirming the following: (1) the agent is authorized to conduct business in the

State in which the agent's facility is located; (2) the agent's facilities are secure, ensuring the confidentiality of NPDB-HIPDB query responses; (3) the agent is explicitly prohibited from using information obtained from the NPDB-HIPDB for any purpose other than that for which the disclosure to the agent was made; and (4) the agent is aware of the sanctions that can be taken against the agent if information is requested, used, or disclosed in violation of NPDB-HIPDB provisions. Authorized agents are not eligible to access information in the Data Banks under their own authority unless the agent organization is a registered entity eligible to query on its own behalf (see page 5, "How to Designate an Agent.")

An eligible entity that has designated an authorized agent may still query and report to the Data Bank(s) directly. While an eligible entity may elect to have query and report responses routed to the agent when the agent queries or reports on the entity's behalf, responses to queries and reports submitted directly by the entity will be sent only to the entity.

Authorized Agents and DBIDs

Since confidential Data Bank information may be received by authorized agents, they must be registered with the Data Banks and receive a DBID. An authorized agent should have only one DBID, though more than one entity may designate the same agent to query or report to the Data Banks. If an authorized agent has been issued more than one DBID, the authorized agent should immediately alert the Data Banks, identify which DBID will be used, and request that any other DBIDs be deactivated.

Is ITP Right For You?

Does your entity perform a large number of queries, reports, or both? Do you use third-party software to submit queries and reports to the IQRS? If you answered "yes" to one or both of these questions, the Interface Control Document (ICD) Transfer Program (ITP) may be a helpful way to query and report.

The ITP is a program that transmits text files of query and report data to the Data Banks and receives text file responses. Each text file can contain numerous queries or reports. Use of text also allows you to parse (i.e., interpret) the responses and individually transmit them electronically to other locations, such as branch offices. Multiple reports and queries can be transmitted to and from the Data Banks without entering subject data into the IQRS. All ITP data is transmitted through an Internet Secure Socket Layer (SSL) connection for security. This ITP program can be executed as a stand-alone program, or it can be executed under the control of another program.

Use of ITP requires the Java 2 Runtime environment, available free from Sun Microsystems' Java web site, java.sun.com. Electronic transaction file submission via ITP requires that data be provided in the format specified in the appropriate ICD. These file formats are available on the NPDB-HIPDB web site at www.npdb-hipdb.com/icd.html. The ICDs provide information about the format, structure, and content of electronic files for submitting queries and reports. ICDs specify the data elements (i.e., variables), data types, acceptable values and codes, organization, and format for submitting queries and reports via the ITP and for interpreting electronic transaction responses received from the ITP.

For more information, call the Customer Service Center at 1-800-767-6732 or visit the Data Banks' web site address. 

Query Responses from page 2

this case, there is a link from the query's Data Bank Control Number (DCN) to a document describing the error.

- Partially Completed: Batch queries that require additional processing time. Please note that, unlike batch queries, single-name queries cannot be Partially Completed; they will be listed as Pending, Completed or Rejected.
- Completed: Queries have been processed and are available for retrieval.

Once the query is processed, the status will read Completed or Rejected. The fee for each Data Bank queried is listed on the *Query Status* screen. The query response may be viewed through the IQRS for 30 calendar days from the day the query was Completed or Rejected.

Viewing and Printing Query Responses

If you select a query's DCN on the *Query Status* screen, the *Subjects Queried* or *Multiple-Name Query Response* screens will display, depending on whether the query was a single-name or batch query. These screens provide, respectively:

- The names of subjects queried or response files that can be opened to check the status of individual queries.
- The query status (Pending, Completed, Partially Completed, or Rejected).
- The number of reports returned from each Data Bank.
- The date that the reports were viewed by your entity.

Helpful Hints from page 2

In most versions of Microsoft Word, the smart quote feature can be disabled as follows:

- On the **Tools** menu, select **AutoCorrect**.
- Select the **AutoFormat As You Type** tab.
- Under **Replace As You Type**, remove the check mark from the **Straight Quotes With Smart Quotes** box and select **OK**.

To replace smart quotes with straight quotes in an existing Word document, disable the smart quote feature (as stated above), then

open the document and follow these additional steps:

- Go to the **Edit** menu and select **Replace**.
- In the **Find What** box, type a quotation mark.
- In the **Replace With** box, type a quotation mark.
- Select the **Replace All** button.

Contact the Data Banks' Customer Service Center at 1-800-767-6732 if you need additional information. ☎

Reports are presented in Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) and may be printed or downloaded. Rejected queries are listed with the reason for rejection. The Subject Name on the *Subjects Queried* screen links to the information your entity submitted on the query subject.

To successfully view and print reports or reasons for rejection, you must use a version of the web browsers Internet Explorer or Netscape Communicator that is supported by the Data Banks. The currently supported browser versions, are listed on the NPDB-HIPDB web site. To determine your version of Netscape Communicator, start the browser, select **Help** from the main menu, and select **About Communicator**. To determine your version of Internet Explorer, start the browser,

select **Help** from the main menu, and select **About Internet Explorer**.

You also need Adobe Acrobat Reader 4.0 (or higher) installed, so that you can read the PDF documents used by the Data Banks. To download the latest version of the free Acrobat Reader, go to www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep.html.

For solutions to viewing and printing problems, select **Help** on the *Subjects Queried* screen. The on-screen **Help** buttons offer useful information should you have questions when tracking and downloading your query responses. ☎

NPDB Reporting from page 1

NPDB. Unfortunately, this process did not always work as designed, sometimes resulting in the NPDB receiving copies of the same report from both the State licensing board and the health care entity. Other health care entities would send one copy to the State licensing board and one copy to the NPDB. To address this problem, as well as lessen the reporting burden and take advantage of improved technology, a software program was developed that would allow a health care entity to submit an electronic copy of a report *directly* to the NPDB and print a hard copy of the report to send to the State licensing board. Health care entities used this method of reporting until late 1999.

As technology improved, a new web-based reporting system, the IQRS, was implemented in November 1999. Under this system, a health care entity is directed to (1) use the IQRS to electronically submit an adverse action report directly to the NPDB within 15 days from the date the adverse action was taken or clinical privileges were voluntarily surrendered, and (2) submit a printed copy of the report to the State licensing board. The Report Verification Document (RVD) that health care entities receive after a report is successfully processed by the NPDB should be used for submission to the appropriate State licensing board.

This procedure provides health care entities an efficient way to report adverse actions to the NPDB while ensuring that State licensing boards also receive the information they need.

To ensure that licensing boards are receiving the report copies that are required to be sent to them, the Division of Practitioner Data Banks (DPDB) has initiated a reporting audit program with interested State Licensing Boards through the Federation of State Medical Boards. 

Submitters v. Agents from page 3

How to Designate an Agent

Before an authorized agent may submit queries or reports on behalf of an entity, the entity's administrator (i.e., the individual that manages entity agent and user accounts) must designate the agent by initiating an agent designation request in the IQRS. To designate an agent, the entity's administrator needs to:

- Log into the IQRS and select **Administrator Options** on the *Entity Registration Confirmation* screen.
- Select **Maintain Agent Information** on the *Administrator Options* screen. The *Agent Information* screen displays.
- Select **Add** on the *Agent Information* screen. The *Designate Authorized Agent* screen displays.

- Complete all fields on the *Designate Authorized Agent* screen, certify the information, and select **Continue**. A formatted copy of the Agent Designation Request will display; this document should be printed for the entity's records.
- Notify the authorized agent's administrator to log into the IQRS to review this request.

The agent's administrator (i.e., the individual that manages the agent's user accounts) then needs to:

- Log into the IQRS. The system will alert the administrator to review electronic correspondence from the Data Banks.
- Verify the accuracy of the information provided and may either accept or decline the request. The agent will be asked to provide a reason if declining.

If the agent accepts, the Agent Designation Response will appear on the screen, and the agent's administrator should print this document for the agent's records. If the agent declines the entity's request, the reason will be sent to the requesting entity. The entity then has the option to make the suggested change(s) by selecting the Agent Designation Rejection link on the *Data Bank Correspondence* screen and updating the information. The agent will receive on-line correspondence from the NPDB-HIPDB confirming the revised designation; the agent may choose to accept or decline the designation. Once the agent designation is accepted and confirmed, the agent can immediately query or report on the entity's behalf. 

Server Upgrades!



In September, the Data Banks will be changing its system hardware. The Data Banks currently use Silicon Graphics, Inc. servers; it will change to Sun servers. This change will further increase security of query and report data, and ensure that the Data Banks continue to function at peak performance as querying and reporting demand increase. As the changeover approaches, there will be information on the NPDB-HIPDB home page regarding exact dates and times that the system will be down to implement the upgrades. These upgrades will not be visible when you log into the IQRS, but they will maintain the Data Banks as a source of accurate, safe, and reliable information into the future. 🌐

On the Horizon

The NPDB Executive Committee will meet on May 13, 2003. Watch for the July issue of *NPDB-HIPDB Data Bank News* for a meeting summary.

In the January 2003 newsletter, an article described an upcoming on-line entity and authorized agent registration capability. Implementation of this capability was moved from June 2003 to April 2003. Beginning this month,

eligible entities and authorized agents can initiate registration with the Data Banks and conduct significant entity updates on-line! Some of these updates will need to be printed and mailed to the Data Banks. Applicable IQRS screens will provide guidance on which updates need to be returned and which updates can be conducted solely on-line.

If you have submitted reports and queries recently, you may have noticed the new look of the IQRS screens. The new appearance corresponds with the NPDB-HIPDB home page and facilitates ease of navigation throughout the IQRS. 🌐

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