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National Practitioner Data Bank—Healthcare Integrity and Protection Data Bank

NPDB-HIPDB Data Bank News

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AAR Format Turns Over a New Leaf This Fall

On September 9, 2002, the Data Banks will implement several improvements to the Adverse Action Report (AAR) format. These changes will enhance the ability of entities to report adverse actions to the Data Banks in a timely, accurate manner.

The format changes will affect the way in which reporting entities submit AARs, including Federal and State licensure actions, clinical privileges actions, professional society membership actions, health plan actions, Government administrative actions, and exclusions/debarments. Entities that report to the Data Banks via the Internet do not need to make any changes in order to interact with the Data Banks. Entities that use the Interface Control Document (ICD) Transfer Program (ITP) or formatted diskette to interact with the Data Banks must update their software to conform with the revised standards. Entities that rely on an authorized agent's or outside vendor's software to submit reports or queries to the Data Banks should contact that organization to ensure that they are making the necessary changes.

One improvement to the AAR format is the **ability to report five Adverse Action Classification codes** on a single report. Adverse Action Classification codes indicate the specific action taken by your organization (e.g., suspension of a professional license, exclusion from a Government health care program, civil money penalty). These changes are being implemented because many reporting entities, particularly State licensing boards, have indicated that they often take several actions based on a single incident.

A second reporting improvement to the AAR format is the development of **new Basis for**

*See **New Leaf** on page 4*

Important! New ICDs for ITP Users

Entities that use the Interface Control Document (ICD) Transfer Program (ITP) to query or report to the Data Banks will be affected by the upcoming changes to Basis for Action, Occupation/Field of Licensure, and Adverse Action Classification codes. If you use ITP to interact with the Data Banks, these changes will affect the way in which you construct Adverse Action Report (AAR) submission and response files. After September 9, 2002, the NPDB-HIPDB will not accept previous submission formats.

The updated ICDs reflect the AAR format changes, as well as various other enhancements for ITP users. Additional changes for ITP users include new data records (e.g., Individual Supplemental Data Record added to AARs, Medical Malpractice Payment Reports (MMPRs), and Judgment or Conviction Reports (JOCRs)), and new fields added to data records (e.g., eight fields added to Judgment or Conviction Type Data Record for JOCRs).

The ICDs are available on the NPDB-HIPDB web site, at *www.npdb-hipdb.com/icd.html.*

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
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Billing History Features

Did you realize that the *Billing History* screen provides you with important information on account activity and payment history for queries to the Data Bank(s) over a period of 60 days?

The *Billing History* screen contains the following helpful fields.

DCN: This column shows the Data Bank Control Number (DCN) for each query response. The DCN is a unique number assigned to each query.

Data Bank Queried: This column indicates the Data Bank(s) queried—NPDB, HIPDB, or both.

Bill Date: This column shows the date on which a query was charged. The bill date may be different than the date you actually submitted the query.

Queries Chrgd/Queries: The first figure of this column shows the number of query names charged; the second figure is the total number of query names submitted. Sometimes the number of queries charged is different than the number of queries submitted. Some query names require additional processing time and are returned as separate query response files, each of which is billed separately for the number of query names in the response file. Thus, you may receive several charge receipts for a single query submission. The first figure of this column shows the number of query charges listed on a particular charge receipt. Separate charge receipts show additional charges, if necessary, for names in separate response files.

Pymt Type: This column displays the form of payment used—either Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) or credit card (CC).

Acct Num: This column shows the last four digits of your EFT or CC account number.

Charge Amount: This column shows the total dollar amount charged to your EFT or CC account for the response file. Click a dollar amount to view the charge receipt and additional information. (Note: Charge receipts are not available to ITP users.)

Bill Status: This column shows the billing status: Billing Dept, Completed, Credit, Free, In Billing, Pending, or Rejected.

- Billing Dept - Alerts you to a problem in billing your account. Please call the Customer Service Center at 1-800-767-6732 and request to speak with a Billing Department representative.

- Completed - Shows you that the query has been processed and billed.

- Credit - Indicates that your EFT or CC account has been credited the value shown in the Charge Amount column.

- Free - Indicates that there is no charge for your query.

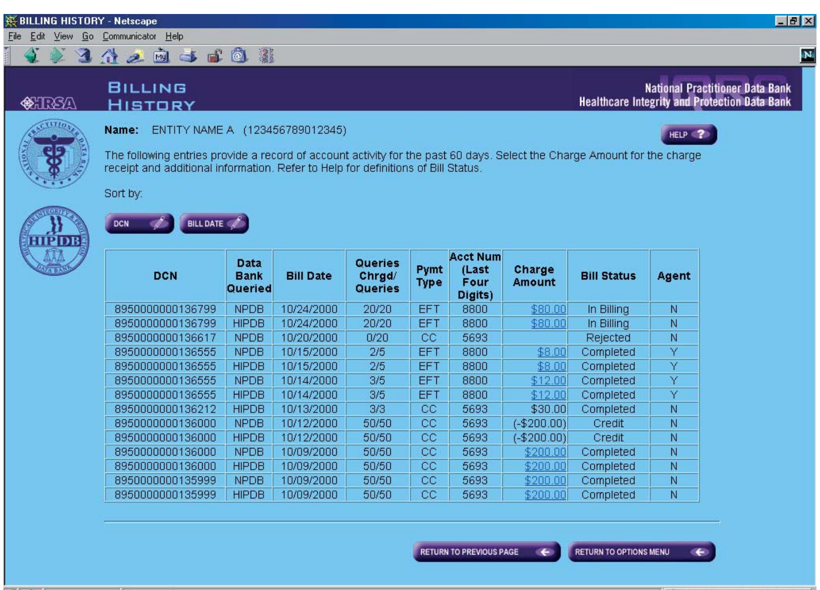
- In Billing - Alerts you to an EFT billing problem. Call the Customer Service Center at 1-800-767-6732 and request to speak with a Billing Department representative. Failure to do so could result in the closure of your EFT account.

- Pending - Informs you that your query is still being processed.

- Rejected - Shows that your credit card is invalid, expired, or has been denied.

Agent: This column indicates whether a query was submitted by an authorized agent. It displays "Y" for yes if the query was submitted by an agent (but charged to the entity), or "N" for no if the query was submitted by the entity. If you are logged in as an agent acting on behalf of an entity, you will not see this column.

Entity DBID: This column displays only if you are logged in as an agent operating on behalf of itself to reconcile charges incurred for all entities. It shows



DCN	Data Bank Queried	Bill Date	Queries Chrgd/ Queries	Pymt Type	Acct Num (Last Four Digits)	Charge Amount	Bill Status	Agent
8950000000136799	NPDB	10/24/2000	20/20	EFT	8800	$80.00	In Billing	N
8950000000136799	HIPDB	10/24/2000	20/20	EFT	8800	$80.00	In Billing	N
8950000000136617	NPDB	10/20/2000	0/20	CC	5693		Rejected	N
8950000000136555	NPDB	10/15/2000	2/5	EFT	8800	$8.00	Completed	Y
8950000000136555	HIPDB	10/15/2000	2/5	EFT	8800	$8.00	Completed	Y
8950000000136555	NPDB	10/14/2000	3/5	EFT	8800	$12.00	Completed	Y
8950000000136555	HIPDB	10/14/2000	3/5	EFT	8800	$12.00	Completed	Y
8950000000136212	HIPDB	10/13/2000	3/3	CC	5693	$30.00	Completed	N
8950000000136000	NPDB	10/12/2000	50/50	CC	5693	(-$200.00)	Credit	N
8950000000136000	HIPDB	10/12/2000	50/50	CC	5693	(-$200.00)	Credit	N
8950000000136000	NPDB	10/09/2000	50/50	CC	5693	$200.00	Completed	N
8950000000136000	HIPDB	10/09/2000	50/50	CC	5693	$200.00	Completed	N
8950000000135999	NPDB	10/09/2000	50/50	CC	5693	$200.00	Completed	N
8950000000135999	HIPDB	10/09/2000	50/50	CC	5693	$200.00	Completed	N

Billing History Screen

*See **Billing History** on page 3*

Reporters: The Data Banks Depend on You

The Data Banks are only as good as the information they contain. Because query results depend on the accuracy and completeness of information submitted in reports, it is crucial that reporters provide the best information possible when reporting.

As a reporter, the NPDB-HIPDB relies on you to provide complete, accurate subject address information. If you do not ensure that a report subject's address is current as reported, you potentially deprive the subject of the opportunity to be notified of the report.

Upon processing a report, the NPDB-HIPDB sends a *Notification of a Report in the Data Bank(s)* to the subject at the address exactly as it appears in the report. The Data Banks do not verify information that a reporter provides as a routine practice. For this reason, the subject address that you provide in a report is a very important. Reporters should take care to cite a complete, up-to-date subject address in each report submitted to the Data Bank(s).

If a reporter enters both a work and home address for an individual subject, the report is mailed to the subject's home address. Though only one address (home or work) is mandatory, entering information for both (if you are sure the information is current for both addresses) is helpful. If you are not sure if an address is current, verify the address with the practitioner or organization, if possible.

If you recently submitted a report that contained an erroneous subject address, please submit a correction to that report. To submit a correction, log in to the IQRS. Select **REPORT** on the *Options* screen. On the *Report Type* screen, enter the DCN of the report you wish to correct and select **CORRECT OR MODIFY A REPORT**. Correct the address information and submit it to the Data Bank(s).

In addition, be sure to submit correct basic identifying information in a report (Social Security Number, Year of Graduation, First Name, Last Name, etc.). Failure to submit correct and complete basic identifying information can result in an erroneous response when an entity queries on the subject of a report you have submitted. If a report on a subject contains incorrect identifying information, queries on that subject will not match to the report, since correct identifying information provided in the queries will not match the incorrect identifying information in the report.

The lack of sufficient information in a report could result in report rejection, and consequently the need for resubmission. As a reporter, you are the Data Banks' most important and valued resource. Please help us make the Data Banks useful—and fair—to queriers and report subjects by reporting responsibly.

Billing History *from page 2*

the corresponding entity Data Bank Identification Number (DBID) for each query made as the agent. If you are logged in as an agent acting on behalf of an entity, you will not see the Entity DBID column.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why do some DCNs display more than once in the DCN column?

The DCN will display once for each Data Bank queried. Additionally, if all queries in a batch are not processed and billed at the same time, there will be more than one entry for a DCN.

2. When am I billed for query submissions?

Credit card and EFT accounts are billed only when the status for a subject query becomes Completed. A fee is then charged for each subject.

3. Why are the number of queries charged sometimes different than the number of queries submitted?

Queries are charged when processing is completed. Query names that need additional processing are billed later than those that do not; this is reflected in the Queries Chrgd/Queries column.

4. What should I do if I find an error in my billing history?

If you find an error, gather your DBID, date of query submission, and DCN (if available). Call the Customer Service Center at 1-800-767-6732 and request to speak to a Billing Department representative.

5. Why do I sometimes find different buttons on the *Billing History* screen?

Depending upon how you log into the IQRS, you may see different buttons on the *Billing History* screen. If you log in as an entity or as an agent acting on behalf of an entity, you will be able to sort by DCN or bill date.

If you log in as an agent acting on behalf of itself (to reconcile charges incurred for all entities), you may sort by DCN, bill date, or entity DBID.

If you access the *Billing History* screen from the *Query Status* screen, information will display for a single DCN or for a list of DCNs on the *Query Status* screen, and there will be no buttons by which to sort by DCN, bill date, or entity DBID.

***New Leaf** from page 1*

Action code lists for each type of adverse action taken against individual and organization subjects. The NPDB-HIPDB developed these new codes to provide a more comprehensive list of reasons for taking an adverse action, and to reduce the need for entities to select the “Other, Not Classified” code.

As part of the development process, NPDB-HIPDB program staff reviewed two years' worth of reporting data (including approximately 9,000 records of Basis for Action selections), and contacted more than 20 organizations representing various types of entities that report adverse actions. Entities will also have the **ability to report up to five Basis for Action codes**, rather than the four codes they now may report.

A third improvement to the AAR format is the development of **new Occupation/ Field of Licensure and Specialty code lists** for individual subjects. The NPDB-HIPDB developed these new codes to provide additional selections to describe occupations and fields of licensure, and to extend the list of specialties to include dentists and dental residents, as well as physicians. The additional Occupation/Field of Licensure codes apply to nurses, psychologists, counselors, and pharmacists only.

In addition to the AAR format modifications, the Data Banks have included **new fields on the *Entity Update* screen to collect reporting entities' point of contact information**. Using the point of contact fields, entities can specify a contact to be used for questions relating to reports. Point of contact information will be displayed on the *Report Verification Document* sent by the Data Banks to the reporting entity to confirm report information. The point of contact will also appear on the *Notification of a Report in the Data Bank(s)* sent to notify the subject of a report. Point of contact information is useful to reporting and querying entities because it allows questions relating to reports to be directed to the appropriate person or office.

We hope that these improvements assist you with your reporting obligations to the NPDB, the HIPDB, or both Data Banks.

Helpful Hints from the Data Banks

MAINTAINING EFT ACCOUNTS

The Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) authorization process now must be initiated now on-line. The Data Banks no longer accept paper authorization forms to initiate EFT.

To set up an EFT account, your entity or agent administrator must log into the Integrated Querying and Reporting Service (IQRS) and enter bank account and routing information onto the *EFT Authorization* screen, accessible from the *Administrator Options* screen. After certifying the EFT authorization, click **SUBMIT TO DATA BANK(S)** and follow the instructions on the *EFT Authorization Status* screen. Query charges are then automatically deducted from the designated EFT account once it has been activated by the Data Banks.

Each entity or agent may have one active EFT account at any time. If EFT information changes, notify the Data Banks by modifying the existing EFT account. Click **AUTHORIZE EFT** on the *Administrator Options* screen, then select **MODIFY EFT ACCOUNT** from the *EFT Options* screen.

When establishing or modifying an EFT account, remember to attach a voided check to the printed, formatted copy of the EFT authorization. Without a voided check, the Data Banks cannot process your request.

ITP USERS: VIEW QUERY CHARGE AMOUNTS THROUGH THE IQRS

If you exchange files with the NPDB-HIPDB using the input and output formats described in the Interface Control Documents (ICDs), you now may view query charge amounts via the IQRS.

ICD Transfer Program (ITP) users can access the IQRS through the NPDB-HIPDB web site, located at *www.npdb-hipdb.com*. To view query charge amounts, log into the IQRS and navigate to the *Options* screen. Click **VIEW BILLING HISTORY** to access the *Billing History* screen, where your query charge amounts are displayed.

You may view query charge amounts for 60 days after the date of the charge; after that time, the information is no longer available.

MANAGING IQRS USER ACCOUNTS

If you are the administrator of your entity's or agent's IQRS account, you may add, edit or delete user accounts by selecting **MAINTAIN USER ACCOUNTS** on the *Options* screen. When creating a new user, click **SAVE** on the *Maintain User Accounts* screen to add the user to your entity's account.

Non-administrator users may update their own passwords by selecting **CHANGE PASSWORD** on the *Options* screen.

Three Simple Steps to Successful Queries

Step 1: Provide Complete and Accurate Information When Submitting Queries

If you are an entity querying the NPDB or the HIPDB on a specific named subject (i.e., explicit query), you must submit complete and correct information to get a timely and accurate response. The Data Banks use a complex algorithm designed specifically to reduce the likelihood of questionable matches and erroneous disclosures. Submitting incomplete or inaccurate information can lead to query rejection, retrieval of incorrect information, or increased response time.

Please verify that the individual or organization identified in your query is the one on which you intend to query. If the information you provide does not accurately identify the intended subject, your query will not match NPDB-HIPDB reports submitted with correct identifying information. When querying the Data Bank(s) for use in reviewing for clinical privileges or employment, affiliation, or licensure, entities are encouraged to gather as much information as possible as part of the application process, to facilitate completion of query submissions.

Certain subject information is mandatory for query submissions; the system rejects queries without information in all mandatory fields.

The following fields are mandatory for individual queries, and must be completed:

- First Name.
- Last Name.
- Gender.
- Date of Birth.
- Valid Address.
- Occupation/Field of Licensure.
- State License Number and State of Licensure.
- Professional School and Year of Graduation (or a Social Security Number (SSN) if license and school information is unavailable).
- Submitter Name.
- Submitter Phone Number.
- Certification Date.

Please provide as much subject information as you can. If possible, submit an SSN in addition to the complete license information, professional school, and year of graduation.

The following fields are mandatory for organization queries, and must be completed:

- Organization Name.
- Address.
- Type of Organization.
- State License Number and State of Licensure (or a Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN) if license information is unavailable).
- Submitter Name.
- Submitter Title.
- Submitter Phone Number.
- Certification Date.

Step 2: Check the Status of Your Queries On-Line

Once your query is validated and submitted, the *Query Confirmation* screen displays. This screen provides the Data Bank Control Number (DCN) for the query and the name, SSN, and department (if relevant and provided in the query) for the subject. Take note of the DCN; you will need to reference this number when checking the status of the query.

You may view the status of the query at any time; status information is indicated in the Status column on the *Query Status* screen. A successfully processed query has a status of “Completed.” If the query has not returned, its status is “Pending.” If the query is not returned within 2 to 3 business days of its submission, contact the Customer Service Center at 1-800-767-6732 (TDD: 703-802-9395; Outside the U.S.: 1-703-802-9380) for assistance.

Important! Do not resubmit a query on a subject in question without the approval of the Customer Service Center, as this will result in duplicate transactions and duplicate query fees.

Step 3: Download Query Responses Within 30 Days

Because of space limitations on the IQRS computer server, entities must retrieve query responses within 30 days of processing. If you do not retrieve the response within that timeframe, you will have to resubmit your query. Because the Data Banks must reprocess the query, you will be charged again.

Query responses are organized by DCN. To retrieve query responses through the IQRS, select **VIEW QUERY RESPONSE** on the *Options* menu. The *Query Status* screen displays. Responses to each query are available electronically within an average of 4 to 6 hours of receipt by the Data Banks. Under certain circumstances, additional processing time may be required.

On the Horizon...

As described in the article *AAR Format Turns Over a New Leaf This Fall* on page 1, the NPDB-HIPDB will implement several improvements to the Adverse Action Report (AAR) format in September 2002. In addition to the AAR format modifications, the NPDB-HIPDB is in the process of developing enhancements to the Medical Malpractice Payment Report (MMPR) format.

The MMPR enhancements will likely include the addition of new fields to the current format in order to capture information that is currently reported in the narrative description field. The implementation is planned for early 2004. More information will be provided about these MMPR format enhancements in the future.

Beginning in December 2002, subjects of reports can use the new on-line Report Response Service to add, modify, or delete Subject Statements from reports; to initiate or remove dispute notations from reports; or to elevate or withdraw reports from Secretarial Review.

In addition to these features, subjects will be able to use the Report Response Service to update their mailing addresses as maintained by the Data Banks. Although the Data Banks are prohibited from modifying information submitted in reports (including subject addresses), if notified via the Report Response Service, the NPDB-HIPDB can maintain subjects' current mailing addresses to ensure that correspondence is sent to the appropriate address, even if the address specified in a report is inaccurate or out-of-date.

Finally, the NPDB-HIPDB is expanding the Data Bank Correspondence feature to include additional message types, and to make message delivery available to all IQRS users, rather than just entity or agent administrators. Data Bank Correspondence will include broadcast messages to inform users of new features or scheduled system downtime. Messages will also provide users with links to the latest issue of *NPDB-HIPDB Data Bank News*. ITP users should access the IQRS periodically to view important Data Bank Correspondence, even though they do not use the IQRS to query or report.

Users may view Data Bank Correspondence by clicking the title of each message, which appears as an underlined link. (Note: Some messages are not links; in such cases, the complete message is displayed on-screen and does not appear underlined.) Correspondence is available for viewing for 30 days, whereupon it will be automatically deleted.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

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