



NPI (National Provider Identifier) Get It. Share It. Use It.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has announced the availability of a new identifier (NPI) will be the single provider identifier, replacing the different provider identifiers you currently use for each health plan with which you do business. This identifier, which implements a requirement of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), must be used by most HIPAA covered entities, which are health plans, health care clearinghouses, and health care providers that conduct electronic transactions.

When national standards and identifiers are in place for electronic claims and other transactions, health care providers will be able to submit transactions to any health plan in the United States. Health plans will be able to send standard transactions such as remittance advices and referral authorizations to health care providers. These national standards will make electronic data

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Soft-Aid, USMD and Visionary Medical Systems join to provide a single-source solution to healthcare

Soft-Aid, USMD and Visionary Medical Systems merge to provide a single-source solution to healthcare providers and payers. In response to market demands for advanced and innovative IT-based solutions from a single-source vendor, Soft-Aid, USMD and Visionary Medical Systems have joined forces to provide an extensive array of products and services through a unique delivery model.

Soft-Aid's comprehensive Medical Office practice management software automates the physician's office from patient registration to scheduling, billing and reporting. Soft-Aid's core offering the "DME Office" resolves critical needs of medical equipment companies, such as inventory management and PO tracking. Visionary's practice management brand Visionary OfficePM, is easy-to-use and integrates with their DreamEMR software, for a complete point of care solution. Then add USMD's care management modularized solutions which bridge the gap between payers and providers for Disease Management, Pay-4-Performance, FQHC unique needs and Patient Health Records (ePHR). The integration of these companies provides a unique paperless delivery platform where insurers work more closely with providers and patients. Together they provide an integrated portfolio of information technology products and services that

enable reduce costs while delivering more uniform care to patients and improved patient safety.

"This combination offers something rare. Our goal is for all of our customers to benefit from the expanded resources and broad product set -- a big company that takes pride in not acting like one," said Jim Clark, COO of Visionary. "We share the same core values and the same passion about serving our customers, improving our products, providing meaningful opportunities for our employees and building enduring value for prospects."

"We have watched carefully as Visionary completed its recent merger while continuing to improve the customer experience and generating strong earnings growth. Our merger integration timeline and focus on retaining customers is modeled on the Visionary-Cus-

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Technology implementation success is not only driven by the vendor, but by the overall ability of the practice to manage change

Many practice management and EMR systems contain similar functionality, are easy to use and address virtually all aspects of the organization's requirements (e.g., scheduling, billing, reporting, clinical documentation and workflow). Thus the key to a successful implementation lies not so much in the system itself, but in the overall ability of the practice to manage the change. Essential elements of change management are planning, communication, organization and resource allocation.

When an EMR is implemented, every employee is affected in some way. For example, front desk staff may be asked to change the way they register patients, because the new EMR system needs different information to be entered. Providers may have to change how they write a progress note in the EMR. The daily routine will be disrupted by the training schedules, the need to accommodate implementation consultants in clinic areas and having reduced access to resources and people who are newly busy with project tasks. As a result of these demands, it is natural for the staff to expect an immediate, direct benefit from their sacrifice.

Addressing short-term staff goals during the project planning session will help to deal with this expectation. For example, announcing the increase in the number of EMR visits per day motivates those staff responsible for the task, and helps everyone to appreciate the progress being made. Organization project leaders should frequently revisit the project goals and inform staff on the organization's progress. Regular reporting of progress toward goals helps everyone stay on board. At the same time, staff input should be solicited,



valued and answered. Clearly, a rapid and effective response to problems is an important strategy for keeping the project progressing in a goal-oriented direction.

Once training is finished, the ongoing success of the EMR system shifts to the organization. Many changes will occur as the system is integrated into all of the daily processes of the organization. Within a year, an administrative structure should evolve that supports the utilization of the system and identifies the ways the system is contributing to the overall success of the organization. ●

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interchange (EDI) a viable and preferable alternative to paper processing for health care providers and health plans alike.

NPI is currently being implemented and HIPAA covered entities must use NPIs to identify health care providers in standard transactions. These transactions include claims, eligibility inquiries and responses, claim status inquiries and responses, referrals, and remittance advices. ●

Health care providers include individuals, such as physicians, dentists, and pharmacists, and organizations, such as hospitals, nursing homes, pharmacies, and group practices. Health care providers who transmit health information electronically in connection with any of the standard transactions are required by the NPI Final Rule to obtain NPIs, even if they use business associates, such as billing agencies, to prepare the transactions.

The NPI will replace health care provider identifiers that are in use today in standard transactions. Implementation of the NPI will eliminate the need for health care providers to use different identification numbers to identify themselves when conducting standard transactions with multiple health plans. Many health plans, including Medicare, Medicaid, and private health insurance issuers, and all health care clearinghouses must accept and use NPIs in standard transactions by May 23, 2007. Small health plans have until May 23, 2008. After those compliance dates, health care providers may use only their NPIs to identify themselves in standard transactions, where the NPI is called for.

Three ways to apply for your NPI:

- Online - <https://nppes.cms.hhs.gov>
- Prepare a paper application which gets sent to the entity that will be assigning the NPI (the Enumerator) on behalf of the Secretary. Copy of the application, including the Enumerator's mailing address are available online - <http://nppes.cms.hhs.gov>
- With your permission, an organization may submit your application in an electronic file. This could mean that a professional association or perhaps a health care provider who is your employer could submit an electronic file containing your information and the information of other health care providers. ●



Anticipate the unexpected, plan for disaster recovery

The devastation caused by natural or man-made catastrophes can impact the day-to-day operations of an entire organization. The 9/11 tragedy and recent hurricanes have prompted many healthcare organizations to reassess the integrity of crucial systems and the security of valuable patient data.

Budget and resources are the primary influencers for the scope and timeline of any disaster recovery plan. To remain viable, medical facilities must consider the bottom line, just as businesses do. Although developing and implementing a disaster recovery system in the office can come with a huge price tag, our ASP solution makes renting your software a very reasonable option.

That is why many organizations have turned to an ASP environment where your data is hosted on our servers allowing access remotely anywhere, anytime through an Internet connection. This environment option gives you the following benefits:

- Reduced hardware costs-- Reduce the need for hardware purchase(s), including servers, networking, back-up and disaster recovery equipment.
- Reduce Human Resource needs-- Eliminate the time and costs of investing in the significant human resources required to build and maintain an in-house system.
- Flexible Application Access-- Users can access data from any location, on any system with an Internet connection 24/7/365 with reliability and security.
- Automatic Back-Ups & Updates-- by outsourcing your server and application hosting and maintenance you can ensure your users are always on the latest application release and your data is



safe in the event of a disaster.

- Peace of Mind-- our ASP customers report a high-satisfaction level and an unquantifiable sense of security. They are now able to focus on core business issues rather than IT concerns and tasks.

Your organization must weigh the costs of disaster readiness against other priorities and determine what risks you can and cannot afford. How much is the security of your critical systems and vital data worth to you and to the patients that you serve? How much would it cost to recover your losses and restore your operational capabilities after an onsite disaster?

To protect and maintain uninterrupted operational capabilities, medical facilities must expand their readiness to include all system threats, whether man-made or natural. Is your organization ready to meet today's challenges? Do you have an effective disaster recovery plan in place? Will it protect you against a crisis?

Healthcare organizations cannot afford extended downtime; mission-critical systems must be available for essential tasks and applications, especially in the event of a disaster. The time to start planning and implementing your recovery strategy is before, not during,

a crisis. Visionary can help you prepare in advance for ongoing, uninterrupted healthcare operations — no matter what catastrophe you might face. Our expert services and ASP environment can help you:

- Keep vital patient information safe and accessible
- Back-up data daily
- Recover data in a timely fashion
- Have Anytime, Anywhere Access

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tomor-First model, which we believe is the best in the industry," Jim added. He will serve as Visionary's chief operations officer following the completion of the merger.



The merger will provide the combined organization with increased leverage and access to critical resources, including professional staff, technical capabilities, centralized leadership and sources of capital. What you currently know and appreciate about Soft Aid – its innovation, robust DME industry product and product delivery – will be enhanced by Visionary's excellence in client service, quality management, technical knowledge and market leadership.

Together Soft-Aid, USMD and Visionary Medical Systems are moving to revolutionize the delivery and use of healthcare IT solutions.



Visionary's Complete System is a leading solution for physicians

Visionary's OFFICE PM and DREAM EMR provides complete front-to-back medical office automation to physicians from scheduling, billing, charting and patient education.

Moving beyond the simple framework of electronic medical records, electronic billing, and scheduling systems, Visionary's total solution provides a paperless medical office environment where workflow is managed and the standard of medical care is elevated. Through its innovative design, Visionary's portfolio of technology helps physicians enjoy increased free time, reduced overhead costs, and increased revenues. In addition, Visionary's systems increasingly provide seamless electronic connectivity to other health care entities such as laboratories, referring physicians, pharmacies and diagnostic centers.

DREAM EMR was launched in 2002 and continues to be one of the only electronic medical records systems to offer voice recognition technology through a third party software called Dragon Naturally Speaking.

DREAM EMR integrates with voice-



driven commands, dictation, specialty specific vocabulary, microphones, hardware, and training optimized to achieve highly accurate voice recognition from the start. Patient notes are instantly generated using the physician's voice, making it a precise and flexible method of charting. Physicians have enthusiastically adopted voice-driven systems because they are already well versed in dictation and prefer using them to the keyboard and mouse. Within a half hour, physicians can begin charting with at least a 90% accuracy rate that quickly increases with use.

Adding Visionary OFFICE a complete practice management solution with DREAM EMR delivers a paperless office that captures patient information from first encounter through to billing. With Visionary's complete solution, physicians are able to remain only one click away from their schedules, messages, labs, and exams.

The Visionary system is easy to use and is designed to be fully customized to a physician's practice. When thoroughly integrated into an office setting, the sys-

tem saves a physician time by creating complete medical charts in a fraction of the time. Chart pulls, which typically consume 20% of a staff's time, are eliminated. Dictation and transcription costs are eliminated resulting in significant cost savings. Down coding is eliminated, and increased physician time allows for increased revenues. Finally, drastically expanded medical records—the natural outcome of a simple-to-use voice-driven system—provide increased peace of mind with regard to the ever-present threat of litigation.

The cost of Visionary's complete system varies based on the size and the hardware requirements of the practice. When the complete system is purchased there is a significant savings, as much as 40%. The system is sold as a per user license.

Designed by physicians for physicians, Visionary's electronic medical office systems are rapidly transforming physician practices to a comprehensive automated system and allowing physicians to focus on what they do best—practice medicine. ●

Keep those letters and questions coming!

If you have an experience with your organization or have questions related to scheduling, billing, EMR, etc. that you would like to have listed in one of our future newsletters, please email, fax or mail your request today.

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