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BEYOND REHAB: CARF Joins the DMEPOS Accreditation Mix

by Beth Kolbe, PT

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Long known for its work with rehab facilities, the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) is now accrediting for most DMEPOS product categories.



Beth Kolbe

When Congress required accreditation of DMEPOS suppliers, the HME industry received the mandate with a bit of angst. Most questions centered around which product categories must become accredited, in which metropolitan areas, and on what timetable, and the relationship between accreditation and the competitive bidding process.

More questions arose when CMS announced the accreditors from which providers could choose. Each of the 10 organizations that CMS approved to accredit DMEPOS suppliers was deemed for a different array of product categories. For example, CMS approved the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) to accredit scores of DMEPOS product categories. However, some industry leaders at first incorrectly believed CARF was limited to accrediting orthotics suppliers and rehabilitation facilities. In fact, CMS approved CARF to accredit suppliers of most DMEPOS subject to competitive bidding. A complete list of CARF's approved product categories is posted at

www.carf.org/dmepos.

Having accredited and consulted with programs ranging from small "mom and pops" to large networks, CARF helps HME suppliers of all sizes to achieve accreditation. CARF's experience in helping organizations operate in conformance to professionally accepted standards is especially beneficial for HME suppliers preparing for an accreditation survey for the first time. Since its founding in 1966, CARF has taken a peer-review approach to accreditation.

For any provider, the first and largest decision in the accreditation process is choosing the accreditor that best matches a supplier's business needs and product categories. Once a decision is made, it is time to begin the process by contacting the organization for help in preparing for a survey. Although unannounced, all surveys are eventually conducted during a supplier's normal business hours.

Following the on-site survey, we at CARF review the findings and render an accreditation decision. Accreditation decisions are made by considering how well a supplier meets the standards and its ability and commitment to maintain and improve its performance. One of three accreditation decisions is possible on the



first survey: 3-year accreditation, 1-year accreditation, or nonaccreditation.

At CARF, a quality improvement plan (QIP) accompanies the accreditation decision. The QIP lists standards that were either not met or partially met. To demonstrate its commitment to improvement and standards conformance, a supplier must complete and submit the QIP within 90 days after receiving the accreditation decision. In keeping with its consultative approach, CARF provides free assistance to help suppliers complete the QIP.



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