

New Jersey EMS Coalition

**Press Release
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**For Immediate Release
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NJ EMS Coalition Cites Success In Delaying HCFA Regs Year's Efforts Yield Indefinite Postponement

Lobbying efforts by the New Jersey EMS Coalition, as well as other states' EMS organizations, paid off yesterday when HCFA announced that it was delaying implementation of its new Medicare fee schedule. The fee schedule was postponed indefinitely, although it is believed the delay will be at least three months.

The postponement was due to "a large volume of comments" addressed to HCFA in response to the proposed regulations as published in The Federal Register in November. The federal agency stated that it did not have "sufficient time to carefully consider all comments and publish a final rule in time to implement the fee schedule by January 1, 2001." Members of the New Jersey EMS Coalition, comprised of every EMS agency in the state, had sent thousands of letters to the government publication in opposition to the proposed regs.

"I believe that New Jersey was instrumental in creating this delay," said Mary Ann Ferrara, President of the New Jersey State First Aid Council, and a member of the NJ EMS Coalition. "Our members alone sent at least a thousand letters of opposition to The Federal Register."

In addition, at a meeting with HCFA top officials in Washington this fall, the NJ EMS Coalition had requested a delay in implementation. Shortly after, the entire New Jersey Congressional delegation sent a letter to HCFA's chief executive, also requesting a delay.

Over the past year, the NJ EMS Coalition has worked diligently to oppose the proposed Medicare fee schedule regulations. A write-in campaign was begun which yielded thousands of letters to HCFA, state and federal legislators, as well as local municipal officers. Congressional support was sought and won, and two letters were sent from the entire federal legislative delegation to the Chief Executive of HCFA and the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services. Coalition members met personally with top HCFA officials in Washington, D.C. on two occasions, and lobbied heavily for a delay or an exclusion to the regulations.

"The NJ EMS Coalition is pleased by HCFA's action," said Martin Hogan, President of the New Jersey Association of Paramedic Programs (NJAPP), and a member of the Coalition. "The delay gives us more time to find solutions to avoid regulations which will harm patient care, and paradoxically, cost the federal government more money."

The NJ EMS Coalition represents every single EMS agency in the state, including the NJ State First Aid Council, the NJ Association of Paramedic Programs, the NJ Mobile Intensive Care Advisory Council, the Medical Transportation Association of NJ, the NJ Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians, as well as the NJ EMS Council..

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