

NCAMES Board Position on Oxygen Reform
April 9, 2009



Our industry is at a cross roads and right now, the DME industry is not speaking with one voice. The most critical issue facing us is the need to come together. The NCAMES leadership understands that we are representing our entire industry and we are hopeful that national leadership follows our lead so that we all work for the entire industry. NCAMES requests a seat at the table to craft realistic and workable reform for both large and small companies.

The MOST pressing issue facing the DME industry is the specter of Competitive Bidding for DMEPOS. Unless we are able to stop this, there will be far reaching implications for patient access, health and safety concerns and elimination of many small businesses, including the jobs they provide. Our country is trying to reform healthcare, one of the important legs of that reform is the move toward community based care, and the proven fiscal savings. Community based care will not work without a viable DME industry; the DME industry will not be viable if Competitive Bidding is implemented. The Board of NCAMES urges AAHomecare to make this the number one priority in our message to Congress.

We are also acutely aware of the need for oxygen reform and welcome the opportunity to embrace this. However, the New Oxygen Coalition has begun this process, and many smaller providers and state associations do not feel as if they have been a part of the process and therefore are not supportive of the initiative. . The Board of NCAMES supports oxygen reform. We feel the process needs further discussion and participation from all aspects of the industry. Conceptually we believe it is the right course for the DME industry. It allows us the opportunity to look at the service component and the clinical care of our patients for the first time and perhaps opens the door for other service lines to be considered in the overall clinical care of a patient. NCAMES believes our message to Congress needs to be well thought out and not caught up in the details of the entire process. We realize the 36 month CAP of oxygen should be part of the reform as well and support working with all parties to make this happen.

What we must do is to work together and present a consolidated voice to address the elimination of competitive bidding for all products and the reform of oxygen. This will help all of us. We realize that any change to the oxygen benefit will have long reaching affects and the ability of our members to survive this type of change will be challenging. We also realize it is already challenging surviving under the oxygen cap. We will continue to do all that we can to support our members and voice our concerns to AAHomecare and still work collectively at the national level on these types of issues.