

North Carolina Association for Medical Equipment Services



Preserving access to quality care
PRESS RELEASE

CONTACT: Beth Bowen, 919-387-1221, beth@ncames.org

Charlotte-Area Patients, Providers Bracing for Jan. 1 Hit to Home Medical Equipment Services

NCAMES Providing Resources to Deal with Expected Problems from New Medicare Bidding Program, Planning Informative Q&A Session

(Charlotte and Raleigh, N.C.) North Carolina's leader in home medical equipment advocacy and education, NCAMES, is launching a new education program to help Charlotte-area home medical equipment patients and providers deal with negative impacts of new Medicare rules going into effect January 1, 2011. These changes to in-home medical care are expected to force hundreds of family run small businesses statewide to cut staff and services or close their doors; Charlotte is one of nine metropolitan areas nationwide to be included in a "Phase 1" rollout of the new rules.

NCAMES is forwarding informational materials to member companies to share with their patients; buying advertising space in local media to alert patients to the changes; promoting an industry website, CompetitiveBiddingConcerns.com, where home medical equipment (HME) providers can report problems with the new rules; and planning a live Charlotte provider Q&A session for patients and their family members.

"We're working overtime to help patients and providers in Charlotte who are about to get hammered by this," NCAMES Executive Director Beth Bowen said, adding, "We're already hearing about major errors with the new program and misinformation from Medicare that is going to hurt patient care and kill businesses."

Bowen pointed to a recent issue reported by a Charlotte HME provider as an example of the type of problems the organization expects to see come January 1. A Charlotte HME provider said one of their patients contacted them to say she had called a national toll-free Medicare hotline run by the Federal Government to get information on changes she might expect. According to the patient, she was told that she should find a new provider because her trusted local provider was not selected by Medicare to continue to provide services, was likely to go out of business and, in turn, the patient would have to pay for her post-cap expenses out of pocket.

"Literally hundreds of independent experts, nationally recognized organizations like the MDA, the American Association of People with Disabilities, the ALS Association, and the National Emphysema/COPD Association, several coalitions and consortium groups, and members of Congress have pointed out major flaws in this new Medicare program that will have disastrous effects on everyone involved. That said, it's still being pushed by special interests in Washington, and we're in the position of trying to help providers and their patients in Charlotte just survive the damage," Bowen said.

As part of this effort, NCAMES is planning a January provider Q&A session with several local Charlotte-area HME business owners, industry experts and elected officials. This informative event will be free and open to the public, where HME patients can ask questions about how to deal with changes to their in-home care. Details on the Q&A session will be available in the days ahead at SaveJobsNC.com and NCAMES.org; for more information contact Beth Bowen at beth@ncames.org or (919) 387-1221.

ABOUT NCAMES

With close to 300 member companies and growing, the North Carolina Association for Medical Equipment Services (NCAMES) is the statewide leader in preserving access to safe, affordable, and therapeutic home medical equipment. We provide advocacy and education to home medical equipment (HME) providers dedicated to helping North Carolina's growing senior population and patients of all ages gain more mobility and experience a high quality of life in the comfort and privacy of their own homes. Instrumental in passing the first HME licensure law in the U.S. which has been working to ensure quality home health care since 1995, NCAMES continues to advocate for seniors and patients in need. For more information, visit www.ncames.org or call (919) 387-1221.