



Preserving access to quality care
PRESS RELEASE

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NCAMES Winter Meeting Focusing on Threat to Home Healthcare

**Two-day event in January 2010 will feature sessions on
restrictive Federal DMEPOS bidding process**

(Raleigh, N.C.) North Carolina's leader in home medical equipment advocacy and education, NCAMES, is preparing multiple educational workshops and presentations for its upcoming annual winter meeting on what newly enacted Federal regulations mean to patients and providers.

The two-day event will be held January 21 and 22 in Greensboro, one of North Carolina's metropolitan areas due to be impacted by restrictive bidding requirements for Medicare-related services and medical equipment implemented by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) in Washington, D.C. The greater Charlotte area is one of nine metropolitan areas currently being affected by the "Phase 1" rollout of the government bidding launched on October 21st of this year.

"Access to home healthcare is our primary concern," said Beth Bowen, NCAMES executive director. "It's clear from what's happening to our member companies in Charlotte that these misguided Federal regulations are going to take away patient access to quality care and put thousands of North Carolinians out of work."

According to Bowen, the Federal bidding regulations are leading to a proliferation of inexperienced, unlicensed out-of-state vendors serving seniors and patients in North Carolina as well as forcing long-time, proven in-state home medical equipment (HME) providers into fee cuts and desperation bidding to continue to service their patients in need.

Marcia Ladd, owner of Triangle Aftercare in Durham, is worried about her longtime customers and their families being able to get the care they deserve from people they know at a local business like hers, which sees 30-40 walk-in customers per day. "The most compelling issue to me is how these regulations limit access; even if you don't have somebody who is affected by aftercare and in need of home medical equipment right now you will, and these rules are going to have an impact," she said.

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Threat to Home Healthcare
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Ladd explained that CMS is bidding-out different categories such as wheelchairs, oxygen, and hospital beds, with the probable effect of each category not being rewarded to the same provider.

“When you have someone coming out of a hospital who needs a wheelchair, a bed, and oxygen, under these regulations they will likely have to go to three different providers. What’s going to

happen if these patients suddenly need help? Are they going to know who to call with so many different providers in the mix? And is the provider they do call going to be local and able to help them or will they be out-of-state and unable to help? These are things that really concern me,” Ladd said.

In addition to workshops on dealing with the new Federal bidding regulations, topics slated for the NCAMES winter meeting seminars and presentations include updates on Medicare and Medicaid; understanding audits and compliance requirements; trends in home modifications to better function with home healthcare equipment; ways to enhance customer service; marketing and business practices; and updates on H.R. 3790, proposed legislation with a “pay for” to eliminate the DMEPOS bidding program.

As of the date of this release, eight out of 13 members of North Carolina’s congressional delegation have signed-on to support H.R. 3790, which will continue to provide access to HME providers who represent the most cost-effective, slowest-growing portion of Medicare spending, increasing only 0.75 percent per year.

For more information on the NCAMES winter meeting contact Beth Bowen at beth@ncames.org or visit www.ncames.org.(more)

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 statewide 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. NCAMES was instrumental in passing the nation’s first HME licensure law which has been working to ensure quality home health care since 1995, and fully supports pending legislation H.R. 3790 to continue HME access for patients in need. For more information, visit www.ncames.org or call (919)-387-1221.

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