

to determine whether it continues to meet these requirements. There is an alternative, however, to surveys by State agencies.

Section 1865(b) of the Act permits "accredited" ASCs to be exempt from routine surveys by State survey agencies to determine compliance with Medicare requirements. Section 1865(b)(1) of the Act provides that if the Secretary finds that accreditation of a provider entity by a national accreditation body demonstrates that all of the applicable conditions and requirements are met, the Secretary would deem those provider entities as meeting the applicable Medicare requirements. Hence, if the Secretary finds that the accreditation of an ASC by a national accreditation body demonstrates that all the Medicare conditions and standards are met or exceeded, then the Secretary "deems" the requirements to be met by the ASC. Our regulations concerning approval of accrediting organizations are at §§ 488.4, 488.6, and 488.8. A national accrediting organization starts the process by requesting that the Secretary recognize its accreditation program. To date, two organizations have been recognized with deeming authority for their ASC programs: the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations and the Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Health Care.

II. Approval of Accreditation Organization

The purpose of this notice is to notify the public of the request of the American Association for Accreditation of Ambulatory Surgery Facilities, Inc. (AAAASF) for approval of its request that the Secretary find its accreditation program for ambulatory surgical centers meets or exceeds the Medicare conditions. This notice also solicits public comment on the ability of this body's requirements to meet or exceed the Medicare conditions for coverage.

Section 1865(b)(2) of the Act requires that the Secretary's findings consider the applying accreditation organization's requirements for accreditation, its survey procedures, its ability to provide adequate resources for conducting required surveys and ability to supply information for use in enforcement activities, its monitoring procedures for provider entities found out of compliance with the conditions or requirements, and its ability to provide the Secretary with necessary data for validation.

Section 1865(b)(3)(A) of the Act requires that the Secretary publish within 60 days of the receipt of a completed application, a notice

identifying the national accreditation body making the request, describing the nature of the request, and providing at least a 30 day public comment period. In addition, the Secretary has 210 days from the receipt of the request to publish a finding of approval or denial of the application.

This notice also solicits public comment on the ability of this body's requirements to meet or exceed the Medicare conditions of coverage.

III. Evaluation of Deeming Request

On November 18, 1997, the AAAASF submitted all the necessary information concerning their request for a finding by the Secretary that its accreditation program met or exceeded the Medicare conditions. Under section 1865(b)(2) of the Act and our regulations at § 488.8 ("Federal review of accreditation organizations") our review and evaluation of AAAASF is being conducted in accordance with, but not necessarily limited to, the following factors:

- The equivalency of AAAASF's requirements for an ASC to our comparable requirements for the ASC.
- AAAASF's survey process to determine the following:
 - The composition of the survey team, surveyor qualifications, and the ability of the organization to provide continuing surveyor training.
 - The comparability of its processes to that of State agencies, including survey frequency, and the ability to investigate and respond appropriately to complaints against accredited facilities.
 - The organization's procedures for monitoring providers or suppliers found by the organization to be out of compliance with program requirements. These monitoring procedures are used only when the organization identifies noncompliance. If noncompliance is identified through validation reviews, the survey agency monitors corrections as specified at § 488.7(b)(3).
 - The ability of the organization to report deficiencies to the surveyed facilities and respond to the facility's plan of correction in a timely manner.
 - The ability of AAAASF to provide us with electronic data in ASCII comparable code and reports necessary for effective validation and assessment of the organization's survey process.
 - The adequacy of AAAASF's staff and other resources, and its financial viability.
 - AAAASF's ability to provide adequate funding for performing required surveys.

- AAAASF's policies with respect to whether surveys are announced or unannounced.

- AAAASF's agreement to provide us with a copy of the most current accreditation survey together with any other information related to the survey as we may require (including corrective action plans).

IV. Notice Upon Completion of Evaluation

Upon completion of our evaluation, including evaluation of comments received as a result of this notice, we will publish a notice in the **Federal Register** announcing the result of our evaluation.

V. Responses to Public Comments

Because of the large number of comments we normally receive on **Federal Register** documents published for comment, we are not able to acknowledge or respond to them individually. We will consider all comments we receive by the date and time specified in the **DATES** section of this preamble and will respond to them in a forthcoming rulemaking document.

(Authority: Section 1865 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395bb))

(Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Program No. 93.778, Medical Assistance Program; No. 93.773 Medicare—Hospital Insurance Program; and No. 93.774, Medicare—Supplementary Medical Insurance Program)

Dated: April 6, 1998.

Nancy-Ann Min DeParle,

Administrator, Health Care Financing Administration.

[FR Doc. 98-11491 Filed 4-29-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4120-01-M

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

[Docket No. FR-4351-N-04]

Office of Policy Development and Research; Notice of Proposed Information Collection for Public Comment

AGENCY: Office of Policy Development and Research, HUD.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The proposed information collection requirement described below will be submitted to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for review, as required by the Paperwork Reduction Act. The Department is soliciting public comments on the subject proposal.

DATES: *Comments due:* June 29, 1998.

ADDRESSES: Interested persons are invited to submit comments regarding this proposal. Comments should refer to the proposal by name and/or OMB Control Number and should be sent to: Reports Liaison Officer, Office of Policy Development and Research, Department of Housing and Urban Development 451—7th Street, SW, Room 8226, Washington, DC 20410.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Contact Priscila J. Prunella, 202-708-3700, extension 5711 (this is not a toll free number).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Department will submit the proposed information collection to OMB for review, as required by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. Chapter 35, as amended).

This Notice is soliciting comments from members of the public and affecting agencies concerning the proposed collection of information to: (1) Evaluate whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility; (2) Evaluate the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of proposed collection of information; (3) Enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (4) Minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond; including through the use of appropriate automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e.g., permitting electronic submission of responses.

This Notice also lists the following information:

Title of Proposal: Neighborhood Networks Evaluation.

Description of the need for information and proposed use: The Department is conducting under contract the evaluation of its new initiative—Neighborhood Networks—to: document the extent to which onsite access to computers and training resources in the Neighborhood Network Centers influences the self-sufficiency, employability, and economic self-reliance of low-income families living in HUD-insured and -assisted properties; and, characterize the composition and performance of the centers.

Members of the affected public: Residents of the HUD-insured and assisted properties who use the computer learning centers and computer learning center managers and/or staff.

Estimation of the total number of hours needed to prepare the information collection including number of

respondents, frequency of response, and hours of response: The researchers will: (1) Survey 150 computer learning center managers twice; the interviews are expected to last 40 minutes; (2) Survey computer learning center clients in three waves—the first wave will cover an initial sample of 350 clients, the second wave will cover fewer clients (approximately 275 clients), and the last wave no fewer than 200 clients; the interviews will last approximately 30 minutes; and (3) Conduct site visits at 9 sites at three separate time periods, coinciding with the client interviews, to interview center staff; the interviews will last approximately one hour.

Status of the proposed information collection: Pending OMB approval.

Authority: Section 3506 of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, 44 U.S.C. Chapter 35, as amended.

Dated: April 20, 1998.

Paul A. Leonard,

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy Development.

[FR Doc. 98-11494 Filed 4-29-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4210-62-M

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

[Docket No. FR-4356-N-02]

Notice of Proposed Information Collection; Comment Request

AGENCY: Office of the Assistant Secretary for Housing, HUD.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The proposed information collection requirement described below will be submitted to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for review, as required by the Paperwork Reduction Act. The Department is soliciting public comments on the subject proposal.

DATES: *Comments due date:* June 29, 1998.

ADDRESSES: Interested persons are invited to submit comments regarding this proposal. Comments should refer to the proposal by name and/or OMB Control Number and should be sent to: Wayne Eddins, Reports Liaison Officer, Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 7th Street, SW, Room 4176, Washington, DC 20410.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Lester J. West, Director, Albany Financial Operations Center, telephone number 518-464-4200 extension 4206 (this is not a toll-free number) for copies of the proposed forms and other available documents.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Department is submitting the proposed information collection to OMB for review, as required by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. Chapter 35, as amended).

This Notice is soliciting comments from members of the public and affecting agencies concerning the proposed collection of information to: (1) Evaluate whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility; (2) Evaluate the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information; (3) Enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (4) Minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond; including through the use of appropriate automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e.g., permitting electronic submission of responses.

This Notice also lists the following information:

Title of Proposal: Repayment Agreement.

OMB Control Number, if applicable: 2502-0483.

Description of the need for the information and proposed use: Once a Debt Servicing Representative has a clear understanding of the debtor's attitude about repayment of the debt and the debtor's ability to repay the debt, attempts should be made to secure a signed repayment agreement.

Agency form numbers, if applicable: HUD-56146.

Members of affected public: Individuals or households.

Estimation of the total numbers of hours needed to prepare the information collection including number of respondents, frequency of response, and hours of response:

Number of respondents: 1,258.

Frequency of response: On occasion.

Total hours of response requested:

1. *Status of the proposed information collection:* Extension of a currently approved collection.

Authority: The Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, 44 U.S.C. Chapter 35, as amended.

Dated: April 24, 1998.

Art Agnos,

Acting Assistant Secretary for Housing-Federal Housing Commissioner.

[FR Doc. 98-11495 Filed 4-29-98; 8:45 am]

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