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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Stephen E. Isaacson, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs)/TRICARE Management Activity, telephone (303) 676-3572, or Ann N. Fazzini, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs)/TRICARE Management Activity, telephone (303) 676-3803.

Background

Commercial claims-auditing software can be a critical tool in addressing fraud and abuse, and commercial systems to detect inappropriate coding/billing have been available for several years. Both the General Accounting Office (GAO/AIMD-98-91), and the HHS Inspector General noted the potential value of such systems as early as 1991. The TRICARE Management Activity has taken a phased approach to implementation of TRICARE Claimcheck, a customized version of the commercially available HBOC/GPG ClaimCheck® software. TRICARE Claimcheck contains over 5 million edits that track appropriate billing. These edits include unbundling incidental procedures, medical visits, pre- and post-operative care, mutually exclusive procedures, assistant surgeons, duplicate procedures, and age/sex conflicts. Ninety-seven percent of claims pass through TRICARE Claimcheck audits without affecting reimbursement. TRICARE Claimcheck was first used in May 1996, and subsequently has been linked with the start of the TRICARE regional at-risk managed care support contracts. Prior to implementation, there was a less-intensive review system that provided only 246 rebundling edits as well as a list of about 250 procedures that were considered to be incidental to another procedure.

If TRICARE Claimcheck edits result in the denial or rebundling of submitted procedure codes, providers may receive lower than expected payments, and it is important that providers and beneficiaries have a recourse. The General Accounting Office (GAO/HEHS-98-80) in its review of TRICARE/CHAMPUS payments to physicians reported some provider concern about the TRICARE Claimcheck system. Congress mandated that the Department establish an appeals mechanism for providers and beneficiaries in section 714 of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 1999. Rulemaking will be initiated to amend 32 CFR 199.10 to address TRICARE Claimcheck appeals procedures. We are

issuing this Notice prior to rulemaking to explain the current appeals process and to invite suggestions as to the form the intended TRICARE Claimcheck appeals mechanism should take.

Current TRICARE Claimcheck appeals process: A TRICARE Claimcheck appeal is an administrative review of auditing logic. The specific dollar amount of an allowance (e.g., the CHAMPUS Maximum Allowable Charge) is not formally appealable under TRICARE Claimcheck appeals or the appeals procedures established in 32 CFR 199.10. TRICARE Claimcheck appeals are made to the TRICARE Managed Care Support Contractor (MCSC) that processed the claim. The MCSC recovers the claim and related documents to completely review the case and verify the accuracy of the application of the TRICARE Claimcheck edits. This process includes: (1) verification of the correct procedure code(s) used; (2) review for clerical errors that may have resulted in incorrect application of the TRICARE Claimcheck edits; (3) medical review; (4) verification that all necessary medical documentation has been submitted; and (5) review to determine if medical circumstances existed that exceeded the expected circumstances upon which the edit is based. A determination that allows additional payment amounts results in an adjustment of the claim by the contractor with no further action required by the beneficiary or provider.

A corollary of the appeals process involves ongoing communications with our MCSC Medical Directors, Lead Agent Medical Directors, and professional societies and other organizations who have contacted the TMA regarding the appropriateness of specific edits of TRICARE Claimcheck. The TMA is working closely with these entities in reviewing comments and comparing them to the clinical/medical rationale of the TRICARE Claimcheck edit. When consistent with TRICARE policy, changes are made in conjunction with the TRICARE Medical Director. This process ensures that its edits do not result in improper denial or reduction of payment. Suggestions are welcome regarding existing TRICARE Claimcheck edits and recommendations for systemic changes to TRICARE Claimcheck. Clinical/medical rationale for the suggested change should be included for review of the recommendation by the TRICARE Medical Director.

Intended TRICARE Claimcheck appeals process: As stated above, rulemaking will be initiated to further implement the Congressional mandate

for a more formalized TRICARE Claimcheck appeals process. In cases where the current TRICARE Claimcheck appeals process described above results in an adverse determination, providers and beneficiaries will have a further level of appeal. Providers and beneficiaries will be able to submit an appeal along with supporting documentation to the TRICARE Management Activity. The requested for appeal will be considered on its own merits and a written response will be provided for each determination made. The appeal decision issued by the TRICARE Management Activity will be the final agency decision on the appeal.

Dated: December 24, 1998.

L.M. Bynum,

Alternate OSD Federal Register Liaison Officer, Department of Defense.

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BILLING CODE 5000-04-M

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Office of the Secretary

Defense Science Board Task Force on National Imagery and Mapping Agency (NIMA)

ACTION: Notice of Advisory Committee Meetings.

SUMMARY: The Defense Science Board Task Force on National Imagery and Mapping Agency (NIMA) will meet in closed session on January 14-15 and February 25-26, 1999 at Strategic Analysis Inc. (SAI), Arlington, Virginia.

The mission of the Defense Science Board is to advise the Secretary of Defense through the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Technology on scientific and technical matters as they affect the perceived needs of the Department of Defense. At these meetings the Task Force will review the objectives and plans of the National Imagery and Mapping Agency (NIMA) to meet the needs of the national and military intelligence customers as they enter the 21st Century.

In accordance with Section 10(d) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act, Pub. L. No. 92-463, as amended (5 U.S.C. App. II, (1994)), it has been determined that these DSB Task Force meetings concern matters listed in 5 U.S.C. 552b(c)(1) (1994), and that accordingly these meetings will be closed to the public.

Dated: December 23, 1998.

L.M. Bynum,

*Alterante OSD Federal Register Liaison
Officer, Department of Defense.*

[FR Doc. 98-34477 Filed 12-29-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 5000-04-M

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Notice of Proposed Information Collection Requests

AGENCY: Department of Education.

SUMMARY: The Leader, Information Management Group, Office of the Chief Financial and Chief Information Officer, invites comments on the proposed information collection requests as required by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995.

DATES: Interested persons are invited to submit comments on or before March 1, 1999.

ADDRESSES: Written comments and requests for copies of the proposed information collection requests should be addressed to Patrick J. Sherrill, Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue, S.W., Room 5624, Regional Office Building 3, Washington, D.C. 20202-4651, or should be electronically mailed to the internet address Pat_Sherrill@ed.gov, or should be faxed to 202-708-9346.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Patrick J. Sherrill (202) 708-8196. Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339 between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m., Eastern time, Monday through Friday.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Section 3506 of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. Chapter 35) requires that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) provide interested Federal agencies and the public an early opportunity to comment on information collection requests. OMB may amend or waive the requirement for public consultation to the extent that public participation in the approval process would defeat the purpose of the information collection, violate State or Federal law, or substantially interfere with any agency's ability to perform its statutory obligations. The Leader, Information Management Group, Office of the Chief Financial and Chief Information Officer, publishes that notice containing proposed information collection requests prior to submission of these requests to OMB. Each proposed information collection, grouped by office, contains the following: (1) Type of review requested,

e.g. new, revision, extension, existing or reinstatement; (2) Title; (3) Summary of the collection; (4) Description of the need for, and proposed use of, the information; (5) Respondents and frequency of collection; and (6) Reporting and/or Recordkeeping burden. OMB invites public comment at the address specified above. Copies of the requests are available from Patrick J. Sherrill at the address specified above.

The Department of Education is especially interested in public comment addressing the following issues: (1) Is this collection necessary to the proper functions of the Department; (2) will this information be processed and used in a timely manner; (3) is the estimate of burden accurate; (4) how might the Department enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (5) how might the Department minimize the burden of this collection on the respondents, including through the use of information technology.

Dated: December 22, 1998.

Kent H. Hannaman,

*Leader, Information Management Group,
Office of the Chief Financial and Chief
Information Officer.*

*Office of Elementary and Secondary
Education*

Type of Review: New.

Title: Safe and Drug-Free Schools (SDFS) Recognition Program/Site Visits.

Frequency: Annually.

Affected Public: State, local or Tribal Gov't, SEAs or LEAs.

Reporting and Recordkeeping Hour Burden: Responses: 130; Burden Hours: 2,760.

Abstract: The SDFS Recognition Program was established to recognize public and private schools that have demonstrated exemplary practices in creating safe and orderly learning environments. The newly redesigned program will focus on: (1) research-based principles; (2) collaboration with partners and/or co-sponsors at the federal, state, and local levels (both public and private); and (3) effective diffusion of knowledge about what works to prevent drug use and violence among youth. The purpose of the site visits is to validate information contained in the applications. The site visit write-ups will be provided to the reviewers to help them make their final recommendations, and will become part of the school's file.

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BILLING CODE 4000-01-P

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