
Reproduced with permission from BNA's Medicare Report, 28 MCR 498, 6/23/17. Copyright © 2017 by The Bureau of National Affairs, Inc. (800-372-1033) <http://www.bna.com>

HHS OIG

Health-Care Watchdog Moves To Monthly HHS Oversight Updates

A Health and Human Services watchdog will update progress on evaluations and audits of departmental programs once a month, breaking from the previous practice of issuing one report each fiscal year.

Greater public transparency was behind the decision to move to monthly updates of the HHS Office of Inspector General's work plan, according to an announcement June 15.

The move will likely raise the profile of the OIG, as well as help focus the resources of other anti-fraud professionals, Louis Saccoccio, chief executive officer of the National Health Care Anti-Fraud Association, told Bloomberg BNA June 16.

"It will provide all participants in the health-care system with a more real-time sense of the OIG's focus," Saccoccio said.

The work plan reports cover agencies such as the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and the National Institutes of Health, and they often review improper payments and other funding issues. Newly added work plan items include a review of accountable care organization quality measures and an evaluation of Medicare drug integrity contractors.

Useful Tool The annual work plan has always been a useful tool for physicians and hospitals, but its infrequent publication can make it slightly outdated, Judy Waltz, a health-care attorney with Foley & Lardner LLP in San Francisco, told Bloomberg BNA June 16.

"By the time an issue makes it to the work plan, sometimes it has become a much bigger issue and one

that a provider would wish they had looked at sooner," Waltz said, noting that some of the OIG's work plan items can go on for more than a year.

Monthly updates can help fix this, Waltz said.

Many physicians and hospitals historically have based their own audit plans on the OIG's work plan, Waltz said. They may need to revisit how they plan their own annual compliance work plans so they can stay abreast of the now-monthly updates, she said.

Waltz said providers may have to spread their compliance planning over a longer period of time, but they should be more up-to-date on current OIG concerns.

The OIG began providing scattered updates to its annual work plan in May 2015. The HHS watchdog provides independent and objective oversight that promotes economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in HHS programs and operations.

Dynamic Report The move to monthly updates is a reflection of the work plan's dynamic nature, Donald White, an OIG spokesman, told Bloomberg BNA June 16. "Work plan changes are made regularly, and the idea now is that as soon as we add something we'll put out an update," White said.

White said the work plan is one of the most popular OIG reports, and he said more frequent updates will give the public the best available information.

By JAMES SWANN

To contact the reporter on this story: James Swann in Washington at jswann1@bna.com

To contact the editor responsible for this story: Kendra Casey Plank at kc Casey@bna.com

The announcement is at <https://oig.hhs.gov/reports-and-publications/workplan/index.asp>.