



**Testimony of the  
American Hospital Association  
before the  
Standards Subcommittee  
of the  
National Committee on Vital and Health Statistics**

**Enrollment of Healthcare Providers by Health Plans**

**November 18, 2011**

I am George Arges, senior director of the health data management group at the American Hospital Association (AHA). On behalf of our more than 5,000 member hospitals, health systems and other health care organizations, and our 42,000 individual members, the AHA thanks you for the opportunity to participate in today's National Committee on Vital and Health Statistics (NCVHS) panel on enrollment of healthcare providers.

Again thank you for the opportunity to discuss ways to standardized provider enrollment. We have a few high level, but very important, comments that we would like the NCVHS to consider. Today we have a disjointed enrollment process that treats provider enumeration, certification, and credentialing as different steps. Such a process creates inefficient, burdensome, and confusing approaches for health plans and providers alike. Improving the enrollment process is complex and will require incremental improvements that build upon one another. There are

several important steps that can help overcome some of the core problems associated with enrollment, including:

- Work to Standardized Enrollment Forms
- Establish a Centralized Online Portal to Handle Provider Enrollment with all Health Plans
- Process to Evaluate the Different Health Plan and State Certification Criteria
- Provide a Stakeholders Forum To Establish Dialogue on Enrollment and Maintenance Criteria

In order to create more efficient electronic enrollment processes, we need to better understand how provider information is used among health plans and begin a process of automating the routine work involved in gathering that information. The process should also include methods for determining the steps needed to create a standardized set of enrollment information among health plans and an acceptable process for managing updates to enrollment information. Such a review must include how best to handle changes or updates to enrollment information as well as how to revalidate that information on a periodic basis.

While the enrollment process must meet the needs of all health plans, it is also important that the process engage the provider community. Providers can help evaluate the information gathered for screening purposes, as well as how to go about managing changes to enrollment information including changes due to provider practice location and ownership changes. A multi-stakeholder group of health plans and providers is essential to help start the review process. An online portal that can serve as the central point for gathering enrollment information is important; besides gathering information, it must also provide a method for handling inquiries or complaints. The

design process must establish a responsive and timely mechanism capable of expediting the provider enrollment process.

Because the passage of the Accountable Care Act (ACA) introduces new entities such as Health Exchanges and Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs) there must be an understanding how these new programs will utilize provider enrollment information and be included in the stakeholder discussion forum.

We would urge the NCVHS to start the process of improving provider enrollment by starting with a recommendation to establish the creation of a multi-stakeholder group. This stakeholder group should be charged with establishing a common set of provider enrollment information as well as designing the forms and templates necessary for managing the electronic communication of the enrollment information. This group should report back to the NCVHS on an annual basis with a set of formal recommendations that they want adopted for the standardization of the provider enrollment process.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our member's thoughts and insights on how we can collectively move forward with the development of new standards for the provider enrollment process.