2. How Do I Install the PC Pricer?

2.1 System Requirements

Prior to attempting to install the PC Pricer, ensure that your PC is compatible with the software. The PC Pricer requires the Windows 95 operating system or a higher version of Windows (e.g. Windows 98, NT, ME, XP, etc.). While earlier versions of some Medicare PC Pricers operated in Windows 3.x or MS-DOS environments, millennium compliance required the software to be converted to Windows 95 compatible operating systems.

2.2 Downloading from the Internet

The PC Pricer is available as a free download from the CMS website. Go to the HH PC Pricer home page at www.cms.hhs.gov/PCPricer/05_HH.asp or follow the PC Pricer link from the home health center page at www.cms.hhs.gov/center/hha.asp. On the HH PC Pricer page, click the link for the version corresponding to the year you wish to download. This will initiate the transfer of a zipped file. On the "File Download" screen that follows, select the "Save this program to disk" option and click okay. Use the "Save As" screen that appears next to choose a drive on which to save the zipped file, then click "Save."

2.3 Installation Instructions

It is advisable to locate the downloaded zipped file on your C:\ drive. The filename will be ZIP_HH0~*x*, with the *x* being a number corresponding to the fiscal year for the Pricer you have downloaded. For example, the Pricer for fiscal year 2001 will be named ZIP_HH0~1.exe. Double click on this file. This will initiate a series of screens allowing you to save the Pricer files to your hard drive.

IMPORTANT: If possible, accept the default locations suggested on the screens. The Pricer must be saved with the default folder name HHAPRC*xx*, with the *xx* being two numbers corresponding to the payment year for the Pricer. If these default settings are changed, the PC Pricer may not function.

Once the unzipping of the file is complete, Windows Explorer will display the following (although folders other than the HHAPRC*xx* folder will vary):

2.4 Keeping the software current

Each version of the HH PPS PC Pricer contains software designed to calculate payments for a particular Federal fiscal year or for a calendar year. The Federal fiscal year runs from October 1st of one year to September 30th of the next. That means the fiscal year 2001 PC Pricer will calculate RAPs and claims beginning on or after October 1, 2000 and ending on or before September 30, 2001. To calculate RAPs or claims beyond this date range, the fiscal year 2002 PC Pricer must be downloaded. The payment year for HH PPS shifted from a fiscal year basis to a calendar year basis effective January 1, 2005.

What this means for most HHAs is that you will likely want to maintain the PC Pricers applicable to all RAPs or claims within the full Medicare claims timely filing period. Since the timely filing period extends 15 to 27 months beyond the service dates of a claim, you may want to maintain three PC Pricers at one time. In calendar year 2008, certain claims with dates in 2006, 2007 and 2008 will be timely for Medicare filing. When calendar year 2009 begins, you will want to download the 2009 PC Pricer, but will be able to remove the 2006 version from your PC if you choose.

New HH Pricer versions for a new calendar year are available for download immediately following January 1st of each year. The software is routinely updated each quarter but HHAs will rarely have reason to update the software more frequently than annually. Unless mid-year legislative changes affect Medicare payment rates, these interim updates only affect the providers listed in the provider files contained in the download (see Chapter 4 for more information on the provider files).