Query Fees

Entity Query Fees

Fees are charged for all queries submitted to the NPDB. The query fee is based on the cost of processing requests and providing information to eligible entities. The fee is levied on a per-name basis. When multiple-name (i.e., batch) queries are submitted, the number of names in the query is multiplied by the per-name fee. If an eligible entity has registered for both the NPDB and the HIPDB and has selected the option to query both Data Banks (in Section D of the *Entity Registration* form), each query is processed against both Data Banks and assessed the current fee for each Data Bank.

The act of submitting a query to the NPDB is considered an agreement to pay the associated fee. A fee is assessed when a query is:

- Processed by the NPDB, regardless of whether there is information on file regarding a subject.
- Rejected by the NPDB because it is improperly completed or lacks required information.

Even when an entity designates an authorized agent to query and/or report on behalf of the entity, the entity is ultimately responsible for payment. Contractual arrangements with authorized agents should include procedures for payment of query fees.

Query fees are subject to change. The Secretary of HHS announces any changes in the *Federal Register*. Query fees are based on the date of receipt at the NPDB.

Self-Query Fees

A practitioner may submit a self-query at any time. Self-query requests for individuals are automatically sent to both the NPDB and the HIPDB, and self-queriers are assessed a fee for each Data Bank. All self-queries must be submitted through the NPDB-HIPDB web site at *www.npdb-hipdb.com*. After completing the on-line application, a self-querier should print the formatted copy, sign it (in ink) in the presence of a notary public, and mail the notarized form to the NPDB-HIPDB at the address noted on the form.

Methods of Payment

The NPDB accepts payment by credit card (VISA, MasterCard, or Discover) or pre-authorized Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT). All self-query fees must be paid by credit card. Personal checks, money orders, or cash are not accepted.

Entities choosing to pay by credit card do not have to make advance arrangements with the NPDB. The user should enter the credit card number and expiration date on the appropriate IQRS screen when creating a query. (Note: Credit card information must be entered each time a query file is created; the IQRS does not currently store this information.)

Entities choosing to pay by EFT must submit an *Electronic Funds Transfer Authorization* form before EFT payments can be processed. The form is available at *www.npdb-hipdb.com.* Entities must provide their Data Bank Identification Number (DBID), bank routing code, account number, the type of account (checking or savings), attach a voided blank check to the form, and sign the form in ink to establish an EFT. Once the completed form has been submitted, the NPDB-HIPDB will establish electronic communications with the entity's bank. This process takes approximately two weeks. The entity will receive verification by mail that the EFT account has been set up successfully. Entities should verify the information for accuracy and, if there are any errors, mark their corrections on the document, sign and date it, and return it to the NPDB-HIPDB. If the information is correct, the entity should retain it for future reference.

Once an entity receives verification, it may begin to pay for query fees using EFT. Query charges will be deducted automatically from the entity's designated EFT account. Unlike the process of paying by credit card, the user does not need to enter EFT account information when creating a query.

Entities are responsible for ensuring that adequate funds are present in their account at the time queries are submitted for processing to avoid interruption and potential termination of services with the Data Banks. If an entity's EFT information changes, the entity is responsible for notifying the Data Banks by submitting a new *Electronic Funds Transfer Authorization* form.

Eligible entities may elect to have outside organizations query and/or report to the Data Banks on their behalf. Such an organization is referred to as the authorized agent (see Chapter D, Queries, for more information about authorized agents). The entity may choose to have the query charge assessed to either the agent's or the entity's credit card or EFT account. Agents that plan to charge query fees to their EFT account must complete an *Electronic Funds Transfer Authorization* form before EFT payments can be processed. If the entity intends for the fees for queries submitted by the agent to be assessed to either the agent's or the entity's EFT account, the entity must indicate this preference on the *Authorized Agent Designation* form, available at *www.npdb-hipdb.com.*

Entities and agents may view query charges on the *Billing History* screen within the IQRS. This screen provides the most current information available for entities and agents to better reconcile query charge amounts as they appear on their EFT or credit card statements. For each query submission, the *Billing History* screen provides the following information: the Data Bank Control Number (DCN) assigned to the query submission, the Data Bank(s) queried, the number of queries processed and charged compared to the total number of queries in that submission, the date the credit card or EFT account was charged, the amount charged, the type of payment used, the last four digits of the account number, and the processing status of the bill.

Entities also receive a Charge Receipt with their query responses. This document, along with the information on the *Billing History* screen, may be used by entities for accounting purposes. The Charge Receipt provides a list of the queried subjects, the search results, and the associated query fees.

An EFT Charge Receipt also contains the following information:

- Data Bank Identification Number (DBID)
- Entity Name
- Entity Address
- Payment Method

- Account Number
- Transaction Date (Date Queried)
- Transaction Number
- Current Date
- Number of Subjects in Query
- Number of Subjects Processed With Charge
- Number of Subjects Previously Processed
- Number of Subjects Not Processed
- Fee Per Subject
- Total Charge

A Credit Card Charge Receipt contains the following information:

- Data Bank Identification Number (DBID)
- Entity Name
- Entity Address
- Payment Method
- Account Number
- Expiration Date
- Transaction Date (Date Queried)
- Transaction Number
- Date Charged
- Number of Subjects in Query
- Number of Subjects Processed With Charge
- Number of Subjects Previously Processed
- Number of Subjects Not Processed
- Fee Per Subject
- Total Charge

The Number of Subjects Not Processed field refers to any query that has a "Pending" status. A status of "Pending" is assigned to any query that requires additional research before it can be completed. Credit cards are billed only when the status for a subject is indicated as "Complete." The Charge Receipt includes the processing and fee information for all subject names processed within a query, regardless of the date that each per-name fee was charged.

Account Discrepancies

If your EFT account information (e.g., routing number, bank account information) changes, you must submit a new *Electronic Funds Transfer Authorization* form that contains the new information. You must ensure that your account information is kept current to avoid interruption of NPDB services.

The NPDB-HIPDB collects outstanding query fee balances. The NPDB-HIPDB will request the entity to complete an *Account Balance Transfer Request* form to authorize settlement of an outstanding balance. The form is available at *www.npdb-hipdb.com*. There is no time limitation associated with the collection of an unpaid query charge.

Reconciliation of credit card statements must be done through the bank that issued the credit card. If you believe that your credit card or your EFT account should be credited or debited, contact the NPDB-HIPDB Customer Service Center for assistance. The NPDB will research the discrepancy and provide you with a resolution or a request for more information.

Credits and Debits

The NPDB issues credits when:

- A fee is incorrectly assessed.
- The NPDB causes a data processing error.

The NPDB issues debits when:

- A credit is mistakenly applied to an account.
- An original charge is not paid.

Requests for credits should be made within a 60-day period. If you suspect that your bill is incorrect, or if you need more information about a transaction on your bill, please write us as soon as possible. We must hear from you no later than 60 days after you submitted the query on which the error or problem appeared. You may call us at 1-800-767-6732 to report the error, but doing so will not preserve your rights. Your letter must provide the following information:

- Your name and credit card or EFT account number
- The dollar amount of the suspected error
- A description of the error and explanation of why you believe there is an error
- Your entity's and/or agent's Data Bank Identification Number (DBID)
- Your telephone number
- Your signature
- A copy of your bill

The NPDB has the right to collect all outstanding balances without prior approval from the customer. This collection authority does not expire.

If your organization is due a credit, the credit must be requested in writing within the time period set forth by the NPDB-HIPDB. After this period, no refunds will be warranted. In the event of a merger or acquisition of another entity, the new organization is responsible for payment of any outstanding debt of the prior organization.

Bankruptcy

Entities are responsible for notifying the NPDB of bankruptcy in writing and must include the following information:

- DBID
- Entity Name
- Entity Address
- Type of Bankruptcy - Chapter 7, Chapter 9, Chapter 11, or State Liquidation

If your organization is undergoing bankruptcy, the outstanding balance is still collectable until final resolution of the bankruptcy. Failure to make payments to the Data Bank(s) can result in your organization being terminated from access to the Data Bank(s).

Questions and Answers

1. **How does an entity request a credit from the NPDB?**

   The entity may request a credit by submitting the necessary details and supporting documentation (e.g., the query Data Bank Control Number, query batch number if part of a multiple-name submission, and billing statement) to the NPDB in writing.

2. **Does the NPDB reconcile credit card mistakes?**

   The NPDB cannot answer questions regarding credit card account statements sent to you by the bank that issued your credit card, nor can the NPDB address or investigate unauthorized charges. Please contact the bank that issued the credit card for assistance.

3. **My hospital is in Chapter 7 bankruptcy. Can it continue to query the NPDB?**

   If your hospital has ongoing business and is functioning as a hospital while concluding its liquidation, even under a debtor-in-possession, it must continue to query the NPDB. If it is in liquidation solely for the purpose of sale of assets and there is no ongoing business as a hospital, there is no reason for your organization to query and your DBID will be deactivated. Your organization is responsible for notifying the NPDB of its status. If the hospital comes under new ownership, the new owner must register with the NPDB and is responsible for fulfilling its reporting and querying obligations.

4. **My hospital is in Chapter 9 bankruptcy. Can it continue to query the NPDB?**

   Yes. Your hospital will be charged for all queries submitted after the NPDB receives notice of the filing of the Petition for Bankruptcy. Organizations that have an obligation to query the NPDB (i.e., hospitals) must still meet their querying obligations.

5. **My hospital is in Chapter 11 bankruptcy. Can it continue to query the NPDB?**

   Yes. Your organization will be charged for all queries submitted after the NPDB receives notice of the filing of the Petition for Bankruptcy. Organizations that have an obligation to query the NPDB (i.e., hospitals) must still meet their querying obligations.

6. **My hospital has been liquidated by the State. Can it continue to query the NPDB?**

   If your hospital has ongoing business and is functioning as a hospital while concluding its liquidation, it must continue to query the NPDB. Once the liquidation process has concluded or your organization has no ongoing business as a hospital, there is no reason for your organization to query and your DBID will be deactivated. Your organization is responsible for notifying the NPDB of its status. If the hospital comes under new ownership, the new owner must register with the NPDB and is responsible for fulfilling its reporting and querying obligations.