FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. What does HCRIS stand for?
A. Healthcare Cost Reporting Information System.

Q. What cost reports are collected?
A. HCRIS collects data from the Hospital Cost Report (CMS-2552-96), Skilled Nursing Facility Cost Report (CMS-2540-96), Home Health Agency Cost Report (CMS-1728-94), Renal Facility Cost Report (CMS-265-94) and Hospice Cost Report (CMS-1984-99).

Q. Does HCRIS collect the entire cost report?
A. For cost reports ending on or after 12/31/2004 HCRIS collects the entire cost report for Renal (except Worksheet A-1) and all of Hospice (except Worksheets A-6 and G-1)

Hospital, HHA and SNF collect a large extract of data from the calculated cost report. The worksheet forms have X's in the fields that are collected in HCRIS.

Q. How do I get the HCRIS files?
A. The Hospital, SNF, HHA, Renal, and Hospice, cost report data files are available for downloading from the CMS website http://www.cms.hhs.gov/CostReports/ for free.

The Hospital and SNF cost report files are also available on CD-Rom for $100.00. People usually purchase the CD if they have problems downloading the files.

Q. I'm having trouble with the download. Can you help?
A. The downloads, especially for Hospital and SNF are very large. Many people have been able to successfully download the files. The biggest problem people experience when downloading is that they do not have enough space in their target location. Others have had their connection time out due to their ISP, their modem, or an Internet router problem, but the biggest problem is space. The files are also available on CD for $100.00, if you keep having problems downloading. See http://www.cms.hhs.gov/CostReports/ for purchase information.

Q. How do I unzip the files once downloaded?
A. Use WinZip 8.0 or higher

Q. Does the HCRIS-Hospital Cost Report files contain all hospitals that file cost reports?
A. All Medicare Certified providers that file cost reports are present on the files if they have been submitted by the fiscal intermediary and have passed all the HCRIS edits.

Q. Does the web file and CD-Rom contain the same data?
A. Yes.

Q.   What types of information are included in the download/CD?
A.   A) Data collected from the cost report
        B) README file as a guide
        C) Cost Report Worksheet forms indicating collected data for Hospital, HHA and
           SNF
        D) Specifications for the worksheets for Hospital, HHA and SNF
        E) Count report of total cost reports received to date and total cost reports for
           each cost report status
        F) Adobe PDF relational data model
        G) SQL table as crosswalk to the report tables
        H) Data Dictionary.
        I) For each subsystem application, you will find also excel spreadsheets
            Explaining MCR, Provider Control Type, Type of Facility and Cost Center
            Codes if applicable.

Q.   In what format are the data files available?
A.   The cost report data is in 3 files (4 for Hospital) that are comma delimited.
        The *_Rpt file contains cost report identification information such as the provider
        number, the fiscal year beginning and ending date, the status of the cost report
        (settled, as submitted, reopened), the type of ownership of the hospital, etc.
        The *_Rpt_Nmrc file contains all numeric data reported on a cost report such as
        costs, charges, ratios, number of beds, etc.
        The *_Rpt_Alphnmrc file contains all alpha data reported on a cost report such as
        hospital name, address, dates, and questions that require a 'yes' response.
        The Hosp_Rollup file contains fields from the cost center coded worksheets that
        have been calculated. See file named Rollup_Description.doc.
        *=subsystem

Q.   What software packages handle the data?
A.   Most of our data users are loading the data into Oracle, SAS, SPSS Statistical
        Package, Microsoft SQL Server, and DB2.

Q.   Can the data be loaded into Microsoft Access?
A.   Yes as long as you do not exceed the size limitations of MSAccess (2GB).

Q.   What are the differences in the data elements of this data set and the data elements
        that were available in the Minimum Data Set?
A.   The cost report data file contains all the data that is collected by HCRIS, whereas
        the Minimum Data Set file was a subset.

Q.   Are data requests accepted?
A.   Small data requests are accepted. Please email the HCRIS mailbox with the appropriate subsystem in the subject line. Please be very specific as to what you want an analyst to extract from the cost report. Let us know the worksheet, line number, and column number of the data you want. Also let us know the fiscal year(s) you need. The subsystem analyst will respond with the cost. CMS must receive payment before the data is queried.

Q.   Is there a minimum cost per request?
A.   Yes, $100.00.

Q.   How do I pay for the data request?
A.   By check or money order made out to CMS.

Q.   What years are contained in the HCRIS-Hospital Cost Report files?
A.   The 2552-96 Hospital cost report is effective for cost reporting periods ending on or after September 30, 1996. The cost report web pages include a count file for each year included in the file.

Q.   What fields are available in this database?
A.   Refer to the Worksheet Forms in your download, CD-Rom or from the cost report web page.

     Note: For Renal and Hospice cost reports ending on or after 12/31/2004 the entire cost report is collected. Prior collection follows Hospital, HHA and SNF where X's on the worksheet forms indicate fields collected in HCRIS.

Q.   When are the Cost Report Data Files updated?
A.   The files are updated on a quarterly basis and are generally available by the end of the month following the quarterly cutoff date. The quarters are March 31, June 30, September 30, and, December 31.

Q.   Is there a common data element that will join all tables?
A.   The report record number (Rpt_Rec_Num) is the unique identifier that is contained in all of the data files. It is the primary key in each subsystem.

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