



HAWAII HEALTH SYSTEMS
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COMPLIANCE ALERT 10-17

Inspector General Updates Congress about OIG Efforts to Combat Health Care Fraud, Waste, and Abuse March 4, 2010

Daniel Levinson, Inspector General for the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) updated the Congressional Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies of the House Committee on Appropriations on efforts to combat health care fraud, waste, and abuse in Medicare and Medicaid on March 4, 2010.

The Inspector General stressed throughout his comments that fraud is a serious problem requiring a serious response. He commented that fraud costs the country billions of dollars and stressed that fraud must continue to be aggressively addressed.

Mr. Levinson highlighted the OIG's "Strategy and Recommendations for Combating Fraud, Waste, and Abuse" that includes:

1. **Enrollment.** Scrutinize individuals and entities that want to participate as providers and suppliers prior to their enrollment in the health care programs
2. **Payment:** Establish payment methodologies that are reasonable and responsive to changes in the marketplace and medical practice.
3. **Compliance:** Assist health care providers and suppliers in adopting practices that promote compliance with program requirements.
4. **Oversight:** Vigilantly monitor the programs for evidence of fraud, waste, and abuse.
5. **Response:** Respond swiftly to detected fraud, impose sufficient punishment to deter others and promptly remedy program vulnerabilities.

Special Emphasis: HEAT. The Inspector General highlighted the Health Care Fraud Prevention and Enforcement Action Team (HEAT) that continues to be a

key method for uncovering and addressing fraud. HEAT is a joint effort by HHS and Department of Justice (DOJ) to leverage resources, expertise, and authorities to prevent fraud and abuse in Medicare and Medicaid. The HEAT initiative, established by HHS Secretary Sebelius and Attorney General Holder in May 2009, is a partnership between the two Departments to share information, spot fraud trends, coordinate prevention and enforcement strategies, and develop new fraud prevention tools.

OIG contributes its expertise to HEAT and makes recommendations to HHS to remedy program vulnerabilities and prevent fraud and abuse. Through HEAT, the OIG is enhancing the impact of its prevention, detection, and enforcement efforts.

Unique HEAT program: Use of, and Proposal to Increase, Strike Forces. The President's Proposed Budget for FY 2011 asks for funds to increase the use of Medicare Fraud Strike Forces (now in 7 locations) to 13 more. These Strike Forces are designed to identify, investigate, and prosecute fraud quickly. They have resulted in 270 convictions and more than \$240 million in recovered funds through restitution, fines, and penalties. New Strike Forces would be established based on analysis of hot spots for Medicare fraud.

Source: Testimony of Daniel R. Levinson, Inspector General, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, House Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies. March 4, 2010