

Compliance Today – September 2019

The National Practitioner Data Bank and its compliance program

By Donald Illich

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The National Practitioner Data Bank (NPDB) is a web-based repository of reports containing information on medical malpractice payments and certain adverse actions related to healthcare practitioners, providers, and suppliers.^[1] The NPDB conducts a robust compliance program to ensure that healthcare organizations submit timely reports containing accurate and complete information.

About the NPDB

The NPDB is managed by the Division of Practitioner Data Bank (DPDB), within the Health Resources and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Its mission is to improve healthcare quality, protect the public, and reduce healthcare fraud and abuse in the US. Established by Congress in 1986, it is a workforce tool that prevents practitioners from moving from state to state without disclosure or discovery of previous damaging performance.^[2]

Congress enacted legislation leading to the creation of the NPDB because it perceived that the increasing occurrence of medical malpractice litigation and the need to improve the quality of medical care had become nationwide problems that warranted greater efforts than could be undertaken by any individual state. Congress felt that the threat of private money damages liability under federal laws, including treble damages liability under federal antitrust law, and unreasonably discouraged physicians and dentists from participating in effective professional peer review. Therefore, Congress sought to provide incentives and protection for physicians and dentists engaging in effective professional peer review.^[3]

NPDB recently streamlined and combined workflows to make it easier and to enable state boards/authorities that regulate healthcare practitioners, providers, suppliers (state boards), and other organizations to renew registrations and attest to their compliance at the same time. In addition, NPDB aligned its internal review with the simpler process to save time and reduce user burden. “Getting on a regular schedule with state boards and professional organizations is working well,” said David Loewenstein, Director of the DPDB. “We routinized our review, so there are fewer problems with obtaining required information and our education and outreach efforts are improving awareness of requirements in support of compliance,” Loewenstein added.^[4]

NPDB by the numbers

- The NPDB contains more than 1.4 million reports from 23,000 entities.
- In 2018, the NPDB had 8.4 million queries and 84,000 new reports.

- The NPDB had 1.8 million disclosures of reports in 2018.
- Querying (by hospitals and healthcare organizations) is either \$2 for a one-year continuous query subscription, or \$2 for a one-time query.
- State licensure actions account for 54% of the reports in the NPDB, and 31% are medical malpractice payment reports.
- Physicians and nurses have the most reports for their practitioner types.

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