Don't Get Surprised By The No Surprises Act





# Disclaimer

The contents of this presentation are for educational purposes and may not accurately reflect the actual law involved for your specific state or federal law. This presentation is intended to provide an overview and personal opinions. Before implementing anything, or taking any action, based upon this presentation please confer with a duly licensed healthcare attorney and other legal, business and financial professionals, and follow their specific advice and guidance. Any discussion of fees or pricing examples used are for instructional purposes only and should not be used as a standard or recommendation for any provider or group of providers.

# The No Surprises Act (NSA)

a

### **Group Survey**

- Know what the NSA is?
- Know how to fully comply?
- Believe you are in full compliance?



# You don't know...



### Agenda

- 1. Overview & Origin
- 2. Oversight, Issues & Help
- 3. Spirit & Intent
- 4. Application & Compliance
- 5. Nuances
- 6. Enforcement, Disputes & Misuse
- 7. Potential Advantages
- 8. Review (and NSA Hack!)



### Agenda

#### 1. Overview & Origin

- 2. Oversight, Issues & Help
- 3. Spirit & Intent
- 4. Application & Compliance
- 5. Nuances
- 6. Enforcement, Disputes & Misuse
- 7. Potential Advantages
- 8. Review (and NSA Hack!)



# What's the view like?

# The Bad And Ugly

- Government fine potential
- Patient-Provider Dispute (PPDR) process risking entire bill loss
- More third-party review of treatment and billings
- Increased scrutiny on "medical necessity" and documentation
- New staff administrative burden placed upon you
- NSA's compliance, oversight and enforcement remains in flux
- And ...

# Attorney threats



### **The New Normal**

**New** patient consent requirement **New** advanced pricing disclosures so patients can shop **New** good faith estimate (GFE) **New** processes for staff, e.g., timely GFEs to patients **New** patient dispute process and a new adjudicating body **New** training for staff and owners, and staying updated **New** ambiguity, confusion, misuse



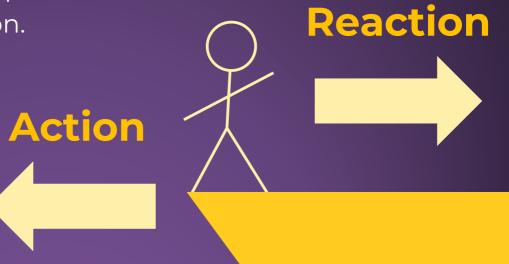


# Why was the NSA enacted?

### What, physics can explain this?

#### Newton's Third Law:

For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction.







ER visits to in-network hospitals resulting in out-ofnetwork billing 2010-2016

Increased to 42.8%



Of those reporting, said their surprise bill amount **exceeded \$1,000** 

20%

Americans saying they or their family **receiving an unexpected medical bill since NSA took effect** 



13-14% Skipped care **Another 13-14%** hesitated to receive care (mostly ER but also mental healthcare)

Trust is waning

# 16%

Adults with any knowledge of NSA as of June 2022

# Greater transparency in medical billing is long overdue

Expanding existing government regulations

# **NSA** Part 1

- June 2021
- Hospitals, ER and air ambulance

# NSA Part 2

- October 2021
- More facilities
- Most providers
- Good faith estimate
- PPDR process

Is this law going to change?

Absolutely!

**But when?** 

"Interim final rules"

Even final rules not so final August 16, 2022 "final ruling" pricing factors & price ruling explanations

# When was compliance to have begun?

3



### Agenda

1. Overview & Origin

#### 2. Oversight, Issues & Help

- 3. Spirit & Intent
- 4. Application & Compliance
- 5. Nuances
- 6. Enforcement, Disputes & Misuse
- 7. Potential Advantages
- 8. Review (and NSA Hack!)



# Who oversees the NSA?



Department of Treasury/IRS Department of Labor/Employee Benefits

Department of Health & Human Services/CMS

A lead dragon?

### Yes

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)

### Agenda

- 1. Overview & Origin
- 2. Oversight, Issues & Help

#### 3. Spirit & Intent

- 4. Application & Compliance
- 5. Nuances
- 6. Enforcement, Disputes & Misuse
- 7. Potential Advantages
- 8. Review (and NSA Hack!)



# What is the NSA really doing?



Protecting consumers from surprise medical bills



### Consumers can shop for a better deal

### **CMS Administration & PIME Help**

CMS Federal Online NSA Portal: cms.gov/nosurprises

CMS NSA Help Desk:

800-985-3059

#### **CMS NSA Email:**

Providers\_enforcement@cms.hhs.gov PI Made Easy (PIME) NSA Intensive: michael@pimadeeasy.com

### **Ending Surprise Medical Bills**

See how new rules help protect people from surprise medical bills and remove consumers from payment disputes between a provider or health care facility and their health plan

Learn More



Policies & resources	Resolving out-of- network payment	Consumers
Deview miles and fast should be		I come about viable and anotestions

### CMS.gov/nosurprises

## **Consumers: new protections against surprise medical bills**

Learn about new rights and protections for consumers to end surprise bills, help consumers better understand costs before getting health care, and remove them from payment disagreements between their health care providers, health care facilities and health plans.



#### What you should know about new protections

Learn and understand what's new to help protect you from

Learn and understand what's new

#### Complaints about medical billing

You can submit a complaint about a medical billing experience you had, whether you're insured or Unincured You can submit a complaint about a medical billing experience you Medical bill disagreements if you're uninsured

If you received a medical bill that's higher than an estimate you got in

If you received a medical bill that's

### cms.gov/medical-bill-rights

### **So...**

## What's the problem?

### **Questions (and confusion)**

- What if a patient has coverage when an appointment was scheduled but loses it before coming in for care?
- What if a surgical team needs more time because of an unexpected complication?
- What if the patient raises a previously undisclosed complaint during visit?
- How can a provider properly advise the patient of other specialists' fees for services, such as imaging?

### Immediate push back ... continuing

- Continuing litigation (8 major suits filed in 2022)
- Lawsuits by ER-related organizations, air ambulance companies, **Texas state medical association** and an individual doctor
- Conflicts regarding arbitrator standards of review
- Constitutional challenges

## Government reaction



### A few answers ... they are trying

- No diagnostic code required if not known or no relevant one
- GFE can be limited to the initial visit without future care listed
- Future care to be addressed in a new GFE
- Must update if changes, e.g., new charges, different frequency
- Updates provided at least one business day before next care visit
- Same-day lab/imaging won't need a GFE (single visit, walk ins)
- If was insured and lost insurance, no need to re-schedule

### And a few others delayed

- GFEs for patients using insurance but not all services covered
- Advanced explanation of benefits (EOB)
- Co-provider and co-facility naming and pricing
- Delayed until implementation regs issued
- Anticipate compliance in 2024

### Agenda

- 1. Overview & Origin
- 2. Oversight, Issues & Help
- 3. Spirit & Intent

## 4. Application & Compliance

- 5. Nuances
- 6. Enforcement, Disputes & Misuse
- 7. Potential Advantages
- 8. Review (and NSA Hack!)



# Does this apply to me?

# YES



### All licensed or certified healthcare providers

# Which patients does NSA apply to?





# **Any** uninsured **or** self-pay patient





## Ask your patient...

Do you have health insurance?

## lf no...

Deemed uninsured and NSA applies!



## lf yes...

Are you going to use your health insurance? If no, NSA applies! If yes, NSA may still apply!



### Is your patient pulling out something other than co-pays?



### Hypothetical

**Q.** A patient was in an auto accident and chooses to not submit to their health insurance. Instead, they're relying on a lien or letter of protection to pay their bill. Is this person considered self-pay under the NSA?

A. Yes. NSA applies. Not submitting to health insurance for potentially covered items/services.

### Hypothetical

**Q.** Same auto accident/PI situation, but the medical bills are going to be submitted to the patient's Medical Payment (MedPay) or Personal Injury Protection (PIP) coverage. Is this person considered self-pay under the NSA?

A. Yes. NSA applies. MedPay and PIP is auto insurance and not health insurance, and it may not cover all medical expenses.

### **Hypothetical 3**

**Q.** The patient is NOT a PI patient and wants to pay cash for treatment that may be covered in whole or in part by their health insurance. Is this individual considered a self-pay individual under the NSA?

A. Yes. They chose not to use their health insurance so you are required to provide a GFE.



### **Group Survey**

What percentage of your patients are uninsured or self-pay?

- A. 10%
- B. 25%
- C. 50%
- D. 75% or more



Your patient is uninsured or self-pay.

Now what?

### Provide new patient consent form

Medical Consent Form

### **Generally required provisions**

- Waive some consumer protections under federal law
- May get a bill for the full charges of these items or services
- Could have to pay out-of-network cost-sharing under health plan
- Fully understand that some or all amounts patient pays might not count toward health plan's deductible or out-ofpocket limit

## What is a good faith estimate (GFE)?



### "Honesty or sincerity of intention"

Notification of expected charges for a scheduled or requested item or service

REPEAT CUSTOMER

## Recurring services included

### **Oral or written notification?**

# BOTH!

### Written notification

- Paper or electronic
- Patient's requested delivery method of delivery
- Timely (see timelines based upon scheduling)
- Can be printed and saved
- If mailed, must be postmarked by the required timelines based upon scheduling timing
- "Clear and understandable language"

What rate do you charge? Cash pay rate or Rate for uninsured or self-pay patients <u>and</u> Reflect usual discounts



# We only have to list OUR services. Right?



Orthopedist

Psychologist



Physical Therapist



Acupuncturist





Chiropractor



Neurologist



Surgical Center/ASC

## **Co-Providers / Co-Facilities**

- Must submit GFEs upon a request
- Sent within 1 business day of the request
- Substitute provider must accept original GFE if can't meet the 1 business day requirement
- Can be combined GFE or separate GFEs

## **Co-Providers / Co-Facility GFE**

- No enforcement in 2022 or 2023 giving you time to prepare
- Patients can request GFE directly from coproviders/facilities
- Will go into effect January 1, 2024 (they say)

## Which provider is convening? Whose leading?

# For how long a time?

1 1 2



Single visit like a lab
All recurring visits
No minimum period
Max 12 months per GFE

## **Good Faith Estimate**

#### [Provider/Facility 1] Estimate

Provider/Facility Name		
Street Address		Provider/F
City		
Contact Person	State	ZIP C
National Provider Identifier	Phone	Email
	Tax	payer Identification Nur

Details of Service			, and a second second	on Num
Service/Item	es and Items for [Provider/Facili	y 1]		
Service/Item	Address where service/item will be provided	Diagnosis Code	Service Code	
	Street City State		Convice Code	Quan
		[ICD code]	[Service Code Type: Service Code Number]	

Total Expected Charges from [Provider/Facility 1] \$ Additional Health Care Provider/Facility Notes

		OMB Control Number (XXXX-XXXX) ExpirationDate [MM/DD/YYYY]
THANKE OF	PROVIDER OR FAC	CILITY]
[NAME OF Good Faith Estimate	for Health Care It	ems and Services
Good Faith Estimate		
Patient	Middle Name	Last Name
Patient First Name	Middle Name	
Patient Date of Birth:	1	
Patient Identification Number		-mail Address
Patient Identification Number Patient Mailing Address, P	hone Number, and L	Apartment
Street or PO Box		
0.00	State	ZIP Code
City		
Phone		
Email Address		
	nce: [] By mail	[] By email
Patient's Contact Prefere	nce: []Byman	
Patient Diagnosis		
Primary Service or Item	Requested/Scheduled	
		Primary Diagnosis Code
Patient Primary Diagnos	is	
		Secondary Diagnosis Code
Patient Secondary Diag	Inosis	

1

# What information must be included in a **GFE?**



### **GFE Information**

- Patient's name and date of birth
- Primary item/service description
- Dates for any multi-visit schedule
- Itemized item/service listing
- Reasonably expected to be furnished
- Including co-providers or co-facilities "in conjunction with" the primary item or service

### **GFE Information**

- All applicable diagnosis codes
- All NPI and Tax ED for each provider/facility
- All addresses where treatment to be furnished
- All reasonably expected service codes
- All reasonably expected charges
- Disclaimers

## What is included in "reasonably expected?"

- All encounters, all patient visits
- All procedures
- All medical tests
- All supplies
- All prescriptions drugs
- All durable medical equipment
- All fees including professional and facility fees

## Disclaimers



### **DISCLAIMERS** (Required and added)

- There may be additional services recommended as part of the course of care that must be scheduled separately and are not included in the GFE.
- The GFE is only an estimate of the services reasonably expected to be furnished, and actual services or charges may differ.
- The individual has the right to initiate the patient-provider dispute resolution process if the actual billed charges are \$400 or more in excess of the GFE.
- Instructions for learning more about the process.
- The GFE is not a contract and the individual can get care elsewhere.

# When must you provide a GFE?

Before care or upon request ...mostly



## **Timing Matters**

# lf... 10+ business days

GFE at least three business days before the appointment



# If... 3-9 business days GFE at least 1 business day before appointment

# What about walk-ins?

If ... scheduled less than 3 business days (including "walk ins") No prior GFE required However... Recommend a GFE before the next recurring visit



### "I Haven't Even Seen this Person Yet!"

**REAL LIFE** 

### **HIS DATING SITE PIC**

# First Visit Nuance

Undetermined: Injury type/extent and scope of services 1st visit GFE can be for patient assessment only. If you require all new patients of that type to undergo diagnostics, they should be included. **Caution**: If you provide actual services, it's best only if they're not reasonably expected at the time of scheduling and do not require immediate care.

### **Bait and Switch**



## Recurring Services In other words ... Chiropractic!

- After initial visit comes your treatment plan GFE
- Provide at least 1 business day in advance, if not sooner
- What, when, how often and how much
- Single GFE okay for recurring services within 12 months
- After 12 months, issue an updated GFE
- Clear and understandable language

And if you stepped in it: **Make sure the right** to a GFE is given to patient before they pay!

### In What Format Do I Send The GFE?

In writing or electronically as the patient requests. Oral okay but must also provide in writing. Patient must be able to both save and print if provided electronically.

### Transmission issues?

Get patient's okay to send via unsecure email. Document any lack of cooperation by patient

info.

when requesting contact

### Hypothetical

**Q.** A patient is undergoing a course of therapy expected to run three days a week for six weeks. Do I need to provide separate GFEs for each therapy visit?

A. No. One GFE covering all recurring services within a 12-month period as long as you list the timing and frequency. If recurring services last more than 12 months, a new GFE will be needed.

### Hypothetical

**Q.** A patient will be undergoing an epidural requiring a pre-op visit, lab tests, imaging, the actual surgery, a post-op visit, and a period of therapy. Would these services be included in separate GFEs or in one GFE?

A. Either. All services in the surgical GFE including anesthesia, professional fees, prescribed meds, etc. For 2023, some can be listed without charges, the actual providers, etc., and separate GFE's are allowable. Starting 2024, you will need to include all in one GFE. So get prepared!

### Hypothetical

**Q.** A patient is receiving cosmetic services to improve his appearance but which are not medically necessary. Is that patient exempt from receiving a GFE and the provider from complying with all NSA requirements?

A. No. There is no current exclusion for services that are not deemed medically necessary, such as cosmetic surgery.

### Agenda

- 1. Overview & Origin
- 2. Oversight, Issues & Help
- 3. Spirit & Intent
- 4. Application & Compliance

### 5. Nuances

- 6. Enforcement, Disputes & Misuse
- 7. Potential Advantage
- 8. Review (and NSA Hack!)





### Must be in the patient's native language

Resource for Entities Covered by Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act Estimates of at Least the Top 15 Languages Spoken by Individuals with Limited English Proficiency for the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Territories. Covered entities may use this information to implement the tagline requirement at § 92.8(d)(1)-(2) of the Section 1557 rule (45 C.F.R. pt. 92), although nothing in the rule requires a covered entity to use this particular resource. For more information about this resource and the data used, refer to the Frequently Asked Questions on these topics.

Rank	State	Language	Estimate
1	CA	Spanish	4,490,408
2	CA	Chinese	610,934
3	CA	Vietnamese	316,886
4	CA	Tagalog	260,443
5	CA	Korean	218,938
6	CA	Armenian	94,516
7	CA	Persian (Farsi)	74,437
8	CA	Russian	73,133
9	CA	Japanese	63,441
10	CA	Arabic	62,500
11	CA	Panjabi*	53,335
12	CA	Mon-Khmer, Cambodian	41,476
13	CA	Hmong	34,953
14	CA	Hindi	31,256
15	CA	Thai	27,573

### Must the patient sign the consent and GFE?

### No. However...



### Play it safe. Have them sign.

# Where to display the right to a GFE?

### **Displaying Patient's RIGHT to a GFE**

"Prominent" Area In Your Office

Website, if you have one



### Once I provide a GFE, I'm done right?

### No!

Anything increasing a prior GFE by at least **\$400** requires an updated or new GFE Provide any updated/new GFE at least 1 business day before the next visit

## GFE too high?

### No worries.

### **GFE too low?**

### You may have a problem.



### Track all your GFEs

## Follow through with timely GFE updates

### What happens if I violate the NSA?

### It Depends

Honest but with a good faith intent
Acted quickly, correcting "as soon as practical"
Refunded monies paid in excess **plus interest**Not an error eligible for dispute (PPDR process)

Is NSA documentation considered "medical records?"



### Yes!

GFE is a medical record
HIPAA privacy applies
Must keep for 6 years
Consent, GFEs and support



Can I charge the patient for providing a GFE?





### Agenda

- 1. Overview & Origin
- 2. Oversight, Issues & Help
- 3. Spirit & Intent
- 4. Application & Compliance
- 5. Nuances

### 6. Enforcement, Disputes & Misuse

- 7. Potential Advantage
- 8. Review (and NSA Hack!)



## Penalties, Disputes & Misuse



### Fines up to

# \$10,000

## per violation

### Considerations

- Degree of culpability
- History and frequency
- Patient impact
- Violation significance
- Hardship situation
- If remedied & how fast



### **Potential Fine Waivers**

- Unaware of violation
- Unreasonable to have known about violation
- Violation promptly corrected
- Reimbursed incorrect payments plus interest
- Not an error eligible for the dispute process

### Grace period for government fines during 2022-2023



What about all the potential patient complaints and disputes?

### The Patient Provider Dispute Resolution (PPDR) Process

#### **Policies & resources**

Review rules and fact sheets on what No Surprises rules cover, and get additional resources with more information.

Overview of rules & fact sheets

#### **Provider resources**

Providers: submit a billing

### Resolving out-ofnetwork payment disputes

Learn about out-of-network payment disputes between providers and health plans and how to start the independent dispute resolution process, apply to become a dispute resolution entity, or submit feedback on applicants.

Learn about or start a payment dispute

Deserve a dissuite secolution

#### Consumers

Learn about rights and protections for consumers to end surprise bills and remove consumers from payment disagreements between their providers, health care facilities and health plans.

For consumers: your rights, protections & resources

## How initiated?

### What Patient Submits

- Date item/service provided
- Description of item or service
- Copy of disputed bill
- Last 4 digits of the account number on the bill
- Copy of disputed GFE
- Contact information for all parties
- State where items/services furnished
- \$25 filing fee

Must you stop collections once PPDR initiated?

### Stop!

- Can't begin or threaten collection
- If collection has begun, stop
- Suspend accrual of any late fee or interest
- No retaliatory actions

# Once initiated, what happens?

### Selected Dispute Resolution (SDR) Entity takes Over

- An SDR entity will review for eligibility
- Two main eligibility criteria:
  - Dispute is \$400 or more
  - Patient initiates within 120 days of their receipt of disputed bill
- 21 calendar days to correct incomplete applications
- SDR will send notice to patient and provider
- Provider has 10 business days to supply information
- Each unique billed item/service reviewed separately
- SDR entity must determine within 30 business days

### What must providers submit?

### What Provider Submits

- Readable copy of disputed GFE
- Readable copy of correlating bills
- Rebuttal documentary proof (if available):
  - Item/service was medically necessary and
  - Error unforeseen but justifiable circumstances

## How will the PPDR be decided?

### SDR Decides: Waive or How Much to Pay

- Patient pays if medically necessary and unforeseen but justifiable
- Patient pays the lesser of:
  - Billed charge
  - Median payment amount for same/similar service in that geographic area
- Where the independent database is less, actual GFE amount governs
- Any discounts you offered but missing from the GFE
- Patient relieved from paying any improper or missing item/service
- If patient prevails, \$25 credited back, and Provider pays \$25 fee

Can informal PPDR dispute be resolved informally?

### Yes! Try it!

- Try financial assistance, lower amounts, or full bill pay
- Earlier patient payments don't infer agreement
- Give notice <u>before</u> SDR entity decides
- Notify the SDR entity within 3 business days
- Once notified, the SDR entity must close the case



### Patient traps & set-ups

### Attorney threats



### Can the patient waive their NSA rights?



### Yes!

3 waiver steps: 1. Notice of GFE right 2. Patient consent 3. Specific NSA waiver Important... Before rendering care watch for recission



Patient waives any rights under the No Surprises Act involving out-ofnetwork billing at in-network facilities and practices by Provider.

# Should you rely on patient's NSA waiver?

Not recommended (at your own risk) Waive and comply for now (recommended)

# How can I avoid stepping in it?

### **Processes Matter**

- Policy and compliance manuals
- Practice procedures & checklists
- Liens & LOPs
- Training staff
- Training coverage providers
- Software & Vendor help
- State Associations
- CMS.gov



### Do Your Best. Always Act in Good Faith

- Act fast
- Track compliance
- Document everything
- Correct errors quickly
- Keep updated

### Agenda

- 1. Overview & Origin
- 2. Oversight, Issues & Help
- 3. Spirit & Intent
- 4. Application & Compliance
- 5. Nuances
- 6. Enforcement, Disputes & Misuse
- 7. Potential Advantage
- 8. Review (and NSA Hack!)



### It's not all bad. In fact, it should be great for many.

### The Good And Great

- Repairing fee distrust caused by "medical debt" fear
- Improved diagnostic skills and documentation
- Improved patient choices, outcomes and relationships
- Higher fee potential via IDR in unique situations
- Built in collaboration between medical specialties
- Compliance support from CMS, vendors and others
- Moving practices away from a "per visit" model
- You can turn a real problem into a greater advantage

# Business advantage injury care **AND** wellness care

### Agenda

- 1. Overview & Origin
- 2. Oversight, Issues & Help
- 3. Spirit & Intent
- 4. Application & Compliance
- 5. Nuances
- 6. Enforcement, Disputes & Misuse
- 7. Potential Advantage

8. Review (and NSA Hack!)



### Key Takeaways

- 1. The NSA applies to you and your patients
- 2. Learn and stay updated on interim final ruling
- 3. Keep in mind the "spirit and intent"
- 4. Provide **prominent notice** of GFE right
- 5. Provide **timely GFE** orally and in writing
- 6. Provide **compliant GFEs** for recurring services up to 1 year
- 7. Provide updated GFE when estimate over by \$400+
- 8. Have the **patient sign** the GFE and all updates
- 9. Retain all GFEs for 6 years as a confidential medical record

### Key Takeaways

- 10. If you erred, correct quickly and document
- 11. Timely comply with **PPDR process notifications**
- 12. Watch out for potential fines, disputes and misuse
- 13. Use existing resources for **guidance and help**
- 14. Adjust your **processes**, **training** and **keep updated**.
- 15. **Take advantage** of the term care plan opportunity
- 16. Potential **IDR advantage with payors**
- 17. Apply this NSA Hack, and soon

### NSA Hack to Catch You Up!

- 1. Every patient bill over \$400, treated on or after 1.2.2022
- 2. "A courtesy copy of your bill for your records"
- 3. If not yet due (e.g., PI) state payment not yet due
- 4. Maintain proof of patient receipt (as best you can)
  - Fax (save confirmation)
  - Email (they confirm can open and viewable)
  - Snail mail (certified or staffer attestation signed/dated and copies kept)
- 5. Monitor for 150 days (for expiration of 120 day limit)
- 6. If no PPDR dispute timely filed, likely in the clear!

You can thrive and not just survive



Gain: More Knowledge Gain: More Strategies Gain: More Tactics Gain: More Tools Gain: More Profits

#### Better. Faster. Easier.

## Take the next step

#### mcoates@pimadeeasy.com 310-651-6391





Learn More. Help is Here.