

Idaho Doctors' Hospital can no longer take Medicare, Medicaid

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services has reinterpreted Section 1861(e) of the Social Security Act, which has led to an end to its provider agreement with Idaho Doctors' Hospital in Blackfoot.

This means the hospital won't be able to accept insurance for patients on Medicare and Medicaid because it won't be reimbursed for its services from the center.

The provider agreement with Idaho Doctors' Hospital ends July 20.

The reinterpretation looked at how a hospital is defined, and reclassified it based on inpatient care and quantity of patients seen. Due to reinterpretation, Idaho Doctors' Hospital no longer meets the definition of a hospital according to the center.

"This change definitely adversely affects Idaho Doctors' Hospital," hospital spokesperson Mark Baker said. "Other insurance provider agreements are tied to the CMS provider agreement and so without significant renegotiation with those other insurance companies, this determination may affect the hospital's ability to accept patients from some other insurances as well."

A hospital can be recognized by the state, but the center doesn't have to recognize it as a hospital.

The interpretation states that a hospital has to be focused on inpatient care, and to be considered inpatient the hospital stay must span at least "two midnights." The hospital also had to have a minimum of two inpatients over the last 12 months.

The center conducted the hospital survey on April 2 and found that the hospital doesn't see and treat enough inpatients to be considered a hospital under the center's guidelines. This doesn't affect the hospital's state licensing.

"To go from being OK just 18 months ago, when we had our last survey, to now being told that we don't meet the CMS conditions of participation because of new interpretations of the regulations is just difficult to comprehend," Dave Lowry, Administrative Manager at Idaho Doctors' Hospital, said in a news release. "Like any business that is regulated by government agencies, we fully expect there to be changes to rules and their interpretations, but this drastic level of change just goes to show how much uncertainty there is in health care right now."

The hospital will continue to be open and provide limited services as staff works to find ways to serve the community and evaluate other options, Baker said.

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