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State phases in new home health verification system By Christina R. Garza Staff Writer

In efforts to combat fraud by home care providers throughout the state, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission will implement a new Electronic Visit Verification system statewide Sept. 1.

"EVV is a telephone and computer-based system that electronically verifies that home care provider visits occur and documents the precise time service provision begins and ends," Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services spokeswoman Melissa Gale said.

The purpose of EVV is to verify that people are receiving the home health services for which they have been authorized to receive and for which the state is being billed. Gale explained.

According to DADS, the system is currently in place in seven regions throughout Texas but won't be implemented in Cameron County until September. The EVV system will run through Sandata Technologies' Santrax EVV system, which is paperless and primarily uses home phone lines.

Computer Information officer, Max Rojas of Texas Visiting Nurse Services in Harlingen, recognizes the EVV technology is useful to some but believes a more practical, cost-effective implementation of visitation verification could be achieved using biometric methods like fingerprint identification.

In order to use the system, Rojas explained the provider will input the individual's landline home telephone number into the EVV system. After the number has been entered into the database, the system will determine if the EVV call

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was made from the specified telephone line or from a different number. In instances where the phone numbers do not match, the system will flag the visit for additional system administrator attention.

Administrators will then contact the home care provider or client to investigate the discrepancy but in the end must rely on the honesty of the home care provider and agency.

"We've given a platform to every single company who was doing false claims complete power over it," Rojas said.

Rojas said this removes the fraud-liability from the home care provider agencies and places it directly on the attendant.

For those without landlines, Fixed Visit Verification systems feature a small device similar to a pager that uses a formula based on the time, date and client identification number to provide a digital readout to the attendant who then calls an automated system to enter the code.

Rojas said the estimated cost of the system at this time would be about 10 cents per call, with at least two calls per visit.

According to Gale, the net savings percentages of using the system have risen from nearly 3 percent to approximately 5 percent amounting to approximately \$16 million saved in the fiscal year.

Felix Gutierrez, founder and CEO of Biometric Data Solutions in Dallas said that a biometric fingerprint device would reduce fraud because it could determine time, date and identification of the attending home care provider.

Gutierrez said another advantage of the device is it that is available for an unlimited number of uses.