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Information and Education Resources for Medicare Providers, Suppliers, and Physicians

Provider Types Affected

All Medicare physicians, providers, and suppliers

Provider Action Needed

This article is informational only and is intended to notify Medicare physicians and other providers about the information and education resources that the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) have developed to help meet their Medicare business needs.

Background

One of the goals of CMS is to give Medicare's 1.2 million physicians and other providers the information they need to understand the program, be aware of changes, and bill correctly. By making information and education resources easily accessible, understandable, and as timely as possible, physicians and other providers will be better able to submit bills correctly the first time, receive reimbursements more quickly, and spend less time dealing with paperwork. All of this can result in more time to spend on patient care. We are committed to accomplishing this goal by offering Medicare physicians and other providers a variety of educational products and services and using various information delivery systems to reach the broadest and most appropriate audiences possible.

Three-Pronged Provider Information and Outreach Approach

CMS relies on the cooperative efforts of its Medicare contractors, Regional Offices, and Central Office provider communications staff to deliver a seamless information and outreach approach to Medicare physicians and other providers.

1) Medicare Contractors

Medicare contractors, also called fiscal intermediaries and carriers, serve as the primary point of contact for most Medicare physicians and other providers. These contractors provide toll-free telephone lines for inquiries, conduct outreach and education, and often interact with local professional associations. Their outreach and education activities include in-person seminars, bulletins and newsletters, speaker

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appearances, and quick dissemination of timely information via web sites and provider-specific electronic listservs (mailing lists).

If you have questions about the Medicare Program, you should first get in touch with your fiscal intermediary or carrier. To find fiscal intermediary and carrier contact information, please visit:

<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/medlearn/tollnums.asp>

2) CMS Regional Offices

Staff at CMS' Regional Offices provide oversight of Medicare contractors and play a key role in resolving issues that physicians and other providers cannot get resolved. Our Regional Offices are active with the physician and other provider communities at State and local levels through their relationships with State and local associations and big billers, and through outreach activities such as hosting provider-oriented meetings and furnishing speakers at professional conferences.

CMS Regional Offices are located at various locations around the country. You can find their contact information at:

<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/about/regions/professionals.asp>

3) CMS Central Office in Baltimore, Maryland

The provider communications staff at the CMS Central Office work closely with both Medicare contractor and Regional Office staff to ensure that consistent and coordinated Medicare information and resources are available to all physicians and other providers. Education and outreach activities from the CMS Central Office are generally targeted to national associations with consistency and timeliness as our top priorities. Given the hectic schedules of today's health care professionals, most of our current initiatives are aimed at fostering a "self-service" environment so that physicians and other providers can access information and education 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. As a result, we have significantly increased the use of the Internet as a key tool for continuous-improvement customer service.

Our efforts have resulted in a variety of products and services, such as:

- **Medlearn Matters Articles** ~ One of the best sources for the latest Medicare information is "Medlearn Matters...Information for Medicare Providers" national articles, which are available at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/medlearn/matters>. These articles are designed to give physicians and other providers and their staff easy to understand information related to new and recently changed Medicare rules and policies. The articles are written in consultation with clinicians and billing experts and focus on how these changes affect physician and other provider business functions. On the Medlearn Matters Web page, you'll find a searchable table for easy access to each article and its corresponding Program instructions, if applicable. You can join the Medlearn Matters listserv to receive electronic notification when new articles are released. Medicare contractors also publish Medlearn Matters articles in their bulletins and on their web sites. This Central Office initiative serves to enhance and support contractors' local provider education efforts by promoting the availability of nationally consistent educational materials.

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- Medicare Learning Network ~ The Medlearn Matters articles are part of a broader inventory of physician and other provider educational products found under the Medicare Learning Network. The Medicare Learning Network is the brand name for official CMS physician and other provider educational products and is designed to promote national consistency of Medicare provider information developed for CMS initiatives. Products range from web-based training courses, comprehensive training guides, brochures, and fact sheets to CD-ROMs and videos. All MLN products are free of charge and can be ordered or downloaded from the Medlearn Web page located at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/medlearn>, which also gives easy access to other resources such as educational web guides, electronic listservs, and provider-specific web pages. Check back often for the latest products, resources, and provider-oriented links.
- CMS Provider Web Pages ~ CMS has designed provider-specific web pages to assist individual physician and other provider types in obtaining information relevant to them more quickly. These web pages are a customized, one-stop web-based resource for the provider, supplier, and physician audience that also includes highlights on items such as new regulations and hot topics, links to general information on enrollment, billing, conditions of participation, publications, education, data, and statistics, and links to "specialty" information. For example, the Medicare Physician Web Page at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/physicians> includes links to the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule Look-Up Tool, National Correct Coding Initiative edits, Practicing Physicians Advisory Council, Physicians Regulatory Issues Team, Medicare Coverage Database, and the CMS On-line Manual. We also have Specialty Physician Web Pages where we will continue to add links of special interest to physician specialties. The first Specialty Physician Web Page, "Medicare Information for Anesthesiologists," is available at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/physicians/anesthesiologist/default.asp>.

From the CMS Home Page at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov>, you can access select physician and other provider pages from the "Professionals" drop-down menu. You can also see a complete listing of available provider and supplier web pages by clicking on <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/providers> or <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/suppliers>. All pages have a comment section for you to electronically submit suggestions. We are always adding new pages, so check the site often.

- **Other Popular Provider Web Pages** ~ In addition to the pages mentioned above, other frequently visited pages include the CMS Online Manual System at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/manuals>; the CMS Quarterly Provider Update at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/providerupdate>, which gives a listing of regulations and major policies currently under development during the quarter, regulations and major policies completed or cancelled, and new or revised manual instructions; the Medicare Coverage Homepage at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/coverage>, which contains complete coverage information including links to CMS coverage databases, frequently asked questions, and "What's New" lists.
- **Listserv Messages** ~ CMS has a number of listservs that transmit important Medicare notices and reminders to subscribers. For example, listservs have been established for most provider-specific web pages as well as for updates on the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement and Modernization Act of 2003, the Medicare Learning Network, and the Quarterly Provider Update. To view and subscribe to one or more listserv, please visit <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/maillinglists>.

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- **Open Door Forums** ~ CMS is very interested in hearing from and interacting with the physicians and other providers who deliver quality health care to our nation's beneficiaries. We continue to emphasize our responsiveness through an ongoing series of Open Door Forums that provide an environment for interactive dialogue. Forums are chaired by senior-level Agency officials and co-chaired by CMS Regional Office officials. For more information, please visit <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/opendoor>.
- **Exhibit Program** ~ CMS hosts exhibit booths at provider, supplier, and physician association meetings. The CMS Exhibit Program provides an excellent opportunity for CMS Central and Regional Office staff to have direct contact with the Medicare provider, supplier, and physician community to listen to issues, concerns, and challenges and to share timely and relevant information. If you are interested in having a CMS exhibit at your national conference, please contact David Clark at dclark@cms.hhs.gov.

Physician and Other Provider Feedback

Although we try our best to be responsive to the Medicare physician and other provider community's education and information needs, we can't do it alone. Your feedback on the effectiveness and usefulness of our educational resources is very important to us as it helps ensure that we are "getting it right." Please submit your comments or suggestions at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/providers> by selecting "Feedback" from the blue template located at the top of the page. There is also a feedback link on the Medlearn Web Pages for your suggestions on new educational products at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/medlearn/suggestform.asp>. We look forward to hearing from you.

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