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Medicare Part A Cost Report: New Online Status Tracking Feature Call

Moderated by Diane Maupai
July 9, 2020 — 1:30 pm ET

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Operator: At this time, I would like to welcome everyone to today's Medicare Learning Network® event. All lines will remain in listen-only mode until the question and answer session. The call is being recorded and transcribed. If you have objections, you may disconnect at this time.

I will now turn the call over to Diane Maupai. Please go ahead.

Announcements & Introduction

Diane Maupai: Well, thanks, Holly. And hello, everyone. This is Diane Maupai from the Provider Communications Group at CMS and I'll be your moderator today. Welcome to this Medicare Learning Network call on how to submit and track your Medicare Part A Cost Report electronically.

Before we get started, you received a link to the presentation in your confirmation email. The presentation is available at the following URL: go.cms.gov/mln-events. Again, that URL is go.cms.gov/mln-events.

This call is open to everyone. If you're a member of the press, you are welcome to listen, but please refrain from asking questions during the Q&A portion of the call. Direct your inquiries to press@cms.hhs.gov.

Due to COVID-19, all our speakers are calling in separately today. I'll now turn the call over to Owen Osaghae.

Presentation

Owen Osaghae: Hi, everyone. My name is Owen Osaghae. I work in the Division of Provider Audit Operations at CMS. My division is responsible for the audit of the Medicare Cost Report and, today, we'll be going over the Medicare Cost Report e-Filing System.

And our contractor, CGI Federal, will be doing the presentation today. At the end of the presentation, there will be a call in and answer question. And if you have any questions, I think there's an email address at the bottom of each slide. You can send in your questions. We will try to address it as soon as possible.

I'm now going to hand over to Jolene from CGI Federal for the presentation. Thanks everyone.

Business Overview

Jolene Nguyen: Thanks, Owen. Good afternoon, everyone. As Owen mentioned, my name is Jolene Nguyen and I'm a senior consultant for CGI Federal, who are the system maintainer for the PS&R and MCReF systems.

All right. So, welcome to today's webinar, which covers how to submit and track your Medicare Part A Cost Report electronically in MCReF.

If we go to slide 2, this slide just has a list of acronyms that may be said throughout the presentation today. And it's just for your reference when accessing these slides at a later time.

Moving to slide 3, today we're here to talk about how MCReF functionality has expanded. So, we have this existing system, MCReF, which you may have used in the past to e-File your cost report.

And now, we are excited to announce that we've updated the system to allow you to track all of the various cost report statuses, such as when your cost report has been accepted through tentative settlement and NPR, which gives providers a lot more transparency into their cost report settlement process.

Going to slide 4, so for today's agenda, we've already started with introductions. And then, next we'll provide a little bit of business background and overview, so that we know what part of Medicare we're talking about that MCReF deals with.

And then, we'll provide a high-level overview and walk through of MCReF itself going through the latest update, as well as the typical e-Filing process, followed by general outreach efforts, and then, finally, finish with a live question and answer session at the end.

And just to note, as Owen mentioned, for any questions you may have during the presentation, since your lines are all muted, please send your questions to the email address listed at the bottom of each slide. We'll be monitoring that inbox throughout, and then we'll address those questions received to that email at the end of the presentation, along with questions that we'll take live off the phone.

Right. So, moving to slide 5. So, we know there are a large number of participants on the line with a variety of different backgrounds and expertise. So, we just wanted to make sure that we're all on the same page as to what MCReF is all about and that's the Medicare Cost Report.

In general, the Medicare Cost Report is used to determine Part A providers' annual Medicare reimbursable costs. And providers use a large number of sources to create their cost report, including CMS' existing system, the Provider Statistical and Reimbursement System, otherwise known as PS&R.

There are approximately 50,000 cost reports submitted each year, which account for over $200 billion worth of Medicare reimbursement. And so, providers themselves have a regulation-driven deadline for submitting an acceptable cost report to their Medicare Administrative Contractor. And then, MACs have a policy-guided requirement for receiving, accepting, reviewing, auditing, and then finalizing cost reports.

Going to slide 6, when looking at the history of how cost report submissions were handled, previously, providers would create their MCR package and mail or hand deliver it to their MAC, with the majority of cost reports being sent in that way, and maybe a few being transmitted via portal websites made available by some MACs.

And so, once MCReF went live in May 2018, providers still had the option to mail or hand deliver their MCR package. But with MCReF, they were now universally able to electronically transmit or, quote/unquote, "e-File" their MCR. And since that go live, we've had over 28,000 MCRs submitted via MCReF. And now, as of April 2020, we've expanded even further on the MCReF functionality, which is what we'll be primarily talking about today.

Going to slide 7, in general CMS' goal is to expand usage of MCReF by making it easier for users and adding value to the system by making it provide more information that you need.

So, if we go to slide 8, to achieve CMS' goal as mentioned, we've expanded on MCReF functionality to now allow for providers to track their cost report status from acceptance through settlement as of April 24, 2020. So, usage is still entirely optional, and the system will continue to be acceptable to EIDM PS&R security officials and backup security officials and also the MCReF-approved cost report filers designated by the security officials.

So, moving to slide 9. Even though MCReF is optional, there are many advantages to using it. In general, MCReF is very easy to use and provides one process for all Part A providers to follow regardless of MAC via one official submission portal, which definitely reduces confusion, delays, and time you may spend on administrative processes.

The other thing that MCReF provides is immediate response regarding the receivability of your cost report submission. So, sometimes you'll mail in your submission and it'll take several days for it to get to your MAC. And then, they'll make a determination as to whether it's received or not. With MCReF, the moment you click the submit button, it will tell you whether your cost report was received or not.

Another thing we're seeing with filings made via MCReF is that they are tentatively settled faster. On average, a tentative settlement determination is made 10 days sooner. And now, with the tracking functionality, providers will have a greater transparency through live insights on the status of your cost report as they go through each stage of the MAC settlement process.

Updated MCReF System

Going to slide 10, now, we'll get into more details of MCReF itself and how to access it. And then, from there, we'll actually go through some screenshots of the changes to the system and how the system works from log-in to tracking and e-Filing.

Going to slide 11, MCReF is still accessible at the same site via the URL listed on the slide at mcref.cms.gov. Access to MCReF is controlled by CMS' Enterprise Identity Management System and, right now, is restricted to EIDM PS&R security officials, back-up security officials, and the MCReF-approved cost report filers as designated by security officials.

So, anyone that has the existing PS&R SO or BSO role will, by default, have access to MCReF. So, you don't have to do anything to change your role. You'll just be able to access the URL and log in.

Any organization that doesn't have access to PS&R will have to enroll a PS&R SO within EIDM in order to access MCReF. And one thing that's particularly important if you do want to use MCReF is to keep your EIDM SO and BSO accounts in good standing. And this includes updating your password per CMS' policies and procedures and the timely replacement of your security official DP turnover or changes in staff.

Any issues with your EIDM account, your credentials, or being able to log in will not be a valid reason for filing your cost report late because you can always drop your cost report in the mail as you do today if, for some reason, you're having those EIDM issues.

So, now, we'll go through a few slides that actually involve accessing and logging into and using the system.

Going to slide 12, when you first navigate to mcref.cms.gov, you'll get the EIDM terms and conditions page. And here you'll review the terms and then click the "I Accept" button at the bottom of the screen.

Going to slide 13, here you'll enter in your EIDM user ID and then click the "Next" button at the bottom of the page.

Moving on slide 14, here is where you would enter in your password corresponding to your EIDM user ID that you had entered on the prior screen, and then you click "Log In" at the bottom of the page as well.

So, going to slide 15, as a reminder, for anyone who has viewed prior MCReF webinars or last used the system before April, the image shown on this slide is what you're accustomed to seeing and known today as MCReF.

We had a single landing page where you pick who to e-File for, for a specific provider, and FYE provided appropriate information and then submitted. And now, we've expanded the MCReF functionality so more than just e-File users now have the ability to track the cost report status.

So, going to slide 16, here we have a new updated MCReF homepage where we have a dashboard view showing the status of your report across all of your providers in here. In general, the updated homepage supports a large set of information and users can select the "Load More" button at the bottom of the page to see the rest of their results in the table as well. And the table itself will have a row for each year and provider you have access to, which also becomes the way you pick which provider and year you want to submit an e-Filing for.

Going to slide 17, the first column in the table is for the provider ID. In general, the provider that will be shown here are the ones that you have registered in EIDM, which have also been entered in STAR. And then, you have the provider name associated to that provider number, which will also be displayed in the table in the second column.

Going to slide 18, looking at the FYE column, for those providers that you are registered for in EIDM which are also in STAR, the years that will be present for those are the ones from 2010 and onwards.

In general, the only thing that will be here are facilities expected to file a cost report. Any subunits of primary facilities or any FQHC, RHC facilities filing consolidated under another cost report will not be present in this table since no cost report is expected for them. Additionally, the table will only include elapsed fiscal years leaving out the current fiscal year and any future fiscal years as no cost report activities are expected until they end.

Going to slide 19, if you don't see a row for a provider in FYE that you are expecting, please confirm proper registration with EIDM. And if you confirm that everything on your end is done correctly and you still don't see it in the system, then you can contact your MACs.

Going to slide 20, the other information on the table includes the cost report status, which represents the overall status of where users' cost reports are in the settlement process. And as we dive deeper into the details during the training, we'll talk about what the different statuses could be and when they occur.

Going to slide 21, finally, if there are any actions you can take for a given provider and fiscal year end, those are displayed in the last column.

Even though the new functionality includes FYE since 2010 for viewing cost report statuses, the providers and years you can e-File for remain the same, which has been supported since MCReF launched. So, for unsettled FYEs ending on or after 12/31/2017 that are eligible for e-Filing, per CMS change request 10611, they'll either have an e-File CR link or an icon identifying a temporary inability to e-File.

All right. So, in general, for the table of information on the right, users will see that everything is initially sorted by cost report status with anything that is pending receipt displayed at the top. And users can sort on any of the columns as they please.

Going to slide 22, on the left-hand side of the new homepage, we have some filters which users can use to help narrow down the results displayed in the table. Any filters that are used will be applied to the whole set of data. And when the screen initially loads, all the relevant information associated to a user's account will display in the table.

The filters will have default settings in place for the fiscal year-end date ranges to go from January 1, 2010, up through yesterday. And to change the default date setting, users can either type in different FYEs or select a date from the calendar widget that will pop up when in that field.

Users also have other filter options such as a quick search where users can type search terms like a partial or a whole provider ID or provider name, and the table will show all rows with that search term in any of the columns.

The other filter is a set of checkboxes for the cost report status. When the page first loads, the various cost report statuses included for the dataset will be listed along with a total count for each status in parentheses. And users can then select one or more statuses to filter the results that suggest those. Users can also mix and match these different filters to find the providers and years they are looking for without scrolling through every page.

So, switching gears a little, I've noted earlier cost reports that are in a pending receipt status will be at the top of the table and for any of those where you can e-File, they'll have the e-File CR link in the action column. And if users were to click on the e-File CR link, they would be taken to the e-File cost report materials page.

So, going to slide 23, so this is that e-File cost report materials page which, as a whole, is just like the screen that users are used to seeing with minimal changes. The only change here is that the provider and the fiscal year-end fields will reflect the values from the rows selected on the homepage.

And if it isn't the provider or year that I wanted to e-File for, I choose the back-search results link to go right back to where I was, filters and all. So, if I were to follow normal process, I would select my Medicare utilization and then fill out each of the slots needed for my cost report materials by browsing for them and selecting the file.

Going to slide 24, once I have all my materials selected and filled out in the appropriate slots, I'd review and acknowledge the certification statement by checking the checkbox and clicking "Submit."

Going to slide 25, after you submitted, you'll see a confirmation message with the option to ether log out or go back to the search results on the homepage to select another provider and FYE to e-File for.

So, overall, this is much the same as how e-Filing worked before. And after we finish talking about the new functionality, we will revisit and refresh on the specifics of the e-Filing process for anyone that's unfamiliar.

Going to slide 26, so if I were to go back to the homepage, the table would reflect that the cost report status for that specific provider and FYE that I just e-Filed for is now processing instead of pending receipt as shown on the top row of the table. Then, I could see the specific information for that by selecting the cost report status processing link which, if I click that, would take me to the View Details page on slide 27.

So, on slide 27, this is the View Details page which is new and is where you can see the more detailed information for your cost report. And I just want to note that the tracking isn't just limited to MCReF submissions, but also deals with ones done via mail or hand delivered. And the information on this page is refreshed throughout each day.

Starting at the top of the View Details page, there'll always be a blue banner with the high-level information for the specific provider and FYE selected. which includes the overall cost report status that we've also seen on the homepage on the right-hand side of that blue banner, as well as the jurisdiction and MAC the provider is assigned to on the left side of the blue banner.

Next, we'll have what I'll refer to as a status tracker shown in grey here that reflects the major phases that a cost report can go through, including the four moves that cost reports undergo – submission, tentative settlement, review, and NPR. Additionally, we have phases for any reopening's or revised NPRs and appeals, whenever applicable.

Each section of the grey tracker corresponds to the labeled section down below. And, in general, we have the labeled sections of information that can be expanded or collapsed by clicking on the plus/minus sign to the left of the label to see the detailed information.

So, starting with the section labeled "Submission," we're going to show you information about each submission that's been made and reflect the submission number, e-Filing ID through MCReF, and the current status of what the MAC is doing with the submission.

In this example, this happens to be for an e-Filing, but as mentioned before, if any submissions were made via mail, that submission information would display here as well. So, for this example, we see that we've e-Filed and the status of that submission is pending MAC's decision.

As mentioned before, once you e-Filed, the overall cost report status displayed in the blue banner will update from pending receipt to processing and will essentially remain in that processing status until the year has been NPR'd.

Going to slide 28, once your MAC has accepted the cost report submissions, users can see that the status within the submission section was updated to accepted as filed as of the accepted date, which is also now shown in that section.

Going to slide 29, after cost report submissions are accepted, MACs will move on to the tentative settlement. And this image on this slide reflects that information. So, for this particular example, you can see that the MACs completed the tentative settlement and issued the letter on April 1, 2020.

Going to slide 30, after tentative settlement, if there are any desk review that needs to be performed by the MAC, that information would appear in the "Review" section. So, as you can see, the review section would reflect the start and end date for a desk review. And then, if there was an audit, this section would also show the audit date and the progress towards completing that audit as well.

Going to slide 31, once the year has been finalized, the date would display in the NPR section. And then, the overall cost report status will change from processing to complete as seen at the top right of the blue banner. So, overall, that is pretty much how the "View Details" page will look for most people.

View Details – Alternate Scenarios

So, moving on to slide 32. Now, we'll go on to show some less-typical scenarios, so going to slide 33. In this example, let's say you needed to go back and forth with your MACs to get an acceptable cost report or needed to amend your filing. Then, we would see the relevant information for each one of those submissions in the submission section, such as if a submission was rejected and why as shown for submission number one.

Going to slide 34. Similarly, we may have multiple tentative dates for multiple submissions, which would be captured in the details of the tentative settlement section, as well. And the information displayed will show you the separate tentative for each of the applicable submissions.

Going to slide 35. For any years that have any reopening or revised NPRs, the section would show a lot of detailed information about them. So, for any that are open or in process, the section would have information such as when the request was received, what issue types were included in the decision, etcetera. And then, this section would also include information for any reopening/revised NPRs that were closed.

Going to slide 36. Finally, we have the appeals section for any cost report appeal information. And while the information in MCReF for PRRB appeals is presented based on MAC records for your convenience, OHCDMS is the official system of record to which you should refer for any question. And there's a note on screen to remind you there about this.

So, similar to reopening/revised NPRs, we'll categorize the appeals as open or closed showing important information relevant to that appeal. Additionally, if you are no longer a part of a group appeal, we would categorize that separately and display that on the screen as well. For any cost reports that either have a reopening/revised NPR or an appeal, the overall cost report status in the blue banner would display as reopening/appeal.

Right. So, that pretty much guided us through what the updated functionality in MCReF entailed.

Initial Provider Feedback on Updated MCReF Functionality

And going to slide 37. Prior to going live with this functionality, we had several provider organizations volunteer to come in and test out the new functionality to get their thoughts and feedback.

Going to slide 38. From that testing, we got a lot of positive feedback, some of which I wanted to call out here regarding the ease of use and the layout of the pages and how it will help with their workload. And as part of the feedback, we also got ideas from people of other things they want to see in MCReF, which we're thinking of and we'll talk on a later slide of what system enhancements CMS is looking at in the future.

E-File Walkthrough

Going to slide 39. Now, that we've covered the new MCReF dashboard update, we'll go through the details of the e-Filing process.

Going to slide 40. So, again, once you've selected who you want to e-File by clicking on the e-File link from the dashboard homepage, you'll be taken to the e-File page with those values displayed preselected at the top.

From there, on slide 41, you'll select the Medicare utilization level of the cost report that you're filing, and you'll confirm your first cost report submission status. So, the information displayed is what the system knows about your submission status. And so, there, you'll just make sure that's in line with what you believe is correct and then you'll proceed.

Going to slide 42. Next, you'll go ahead and upload all of your cost report material. And some materials are going to be required based on the type of your provider, the type that you are, or the Medicare utilization you have selected. And that's indicated based on the little red asterisk to the left of the field.

So, you'll see in the example on the slide that the ECR, Print Image, and sign Certification Page are required. And you can see that the provider has actually uploaded those documents in those slots. And so, to upload anything for a particular row, all you have to do is click the "Browse" button to the right corresponding to that row, and then, navigate to the location either on your network driver or your work computer for that file. So, you'll select it, and then, you'll see the path in the file upload column for that row.

The system expects that you only upload one file per row. So, if you have multiple files that you submit as part of your supporting documentation, that would all go into a ZIP file or another archived file type in the other row in the other slot.

So, as noted on the screen just above the table, you should never encrypt or password protect any of the files, either the main file that you submit or a file within the ZIP file. The system is a secure portal for transmission of your cost report materials, including safe transmit of your PII and PHI. So, do not password protect or encrypt your file.

Okay. So, once you've attached all the materials needed to complete your submission, you need to read the acknowledging statement at the bottom of the screen, acknowledging that this is your official submission to CMS and your MAC. And once you indicate your acknowledgement of the statement by checking that box, that's when the "Submit" button will become activated.

So, if you notice right now, the box is not checked and the "Submit" button is disabled. Once you select it and that "Submit" button is enabled, at that time, when you click "Submit," then the system will perform specific validations just to make sure it is a sound submission.

Moving to slide 43. This screenshot is an example of what an error would look like. In general, when you submit and there's an error encountered, you'll get a message at the top of the page that notifies you and tells you how to correct it.

In this case, the user did receive an error message. And since you received an error message, nothing went through and your MAC won't see anything about this e-Filing. However, the error message section pops up on the screen and essentially gives you an error code so that you can have for your reference to look up within the user manual or for referring to in communication with your MAC, if needed.

So, in this example, the issue here is that the provider FYB or FYE specified in the cost report doesn't match the value selected on the screen. And, in particular, we point out to you that the fiscal year end that's in the cost report doesn't match the one that's selected on the screen.

So, in this case, the system looks in the ECR file, determined that fiscal year ended 9/30/2019 in the file, but the submission that's made on the screen is for 12/31/2019. And so, essentially, the user would have to resolve this issue to successfully submit their cost report to MCReF.

Once they've resolved the issue and uploaded the correct file to the ECR slot and submit again, if no error or warnings are triggered, they'll be presented with a success message, which is what we see on the next slide, slide 44.

So, here we show the success message at the top of the screen. And it informs you that the provider and fiscal year end that you filed for, your cost report has been electronically postmarked with CMS as of the date and time in Eastern Time that you made the submission.

The system will also give you a unique e-Filing ID for your reference if you need to talk or discuss this cost report or for your record in general. Users will then have the option to either log out or return back to the search results on the homepage to continue e-Filing other FYEs or track the status of their cost report.

Moving to slide 45. So, the prior slides we went over covered how you'll submit a cost report and now we'll actually dive into the details of the field. So, as noted previously, we have the provider and FYE values that were selected from the homepage.

Then, there is the Medicare utilization, which is a dropdown with "Full," "Low," and "No" as options to select. Then, you confirm the first cost report submission indicator, and this tells you if the cost report has already been recorded in STAR as received by your MAC for the provider and fiscal year end that you've selected. So, it'll be "yes" if it is your first cost report submission and we have an indicator that there aren't any records in STAR. And then, it'll be "no" if there has been something received in STAR.

Next is the cost report materials table and that's where you upload all of your files. Essentially, this is where you would upload all of your cost report materials needed to submit a complete cost report package. So, just like you would mail in everything, everything needs to go in a dedicated slot or in the other slot for supporting documentation.

Going to slide 46. We have each of the different types of cost report materials, which I'll briefly touch on a few key things for these items. But the rest of the information is here for your reference and it's also available in the user manual.

First is the ECR, which is the Electronic Cost Report file that was generated from your CMS-certified ECR vendor software that is not a PDF, a ZIP file, or another archived file type. Then, we have the Print Image, often referred to as the PI file, which is the file that is generated from your vendor software that starts with a PI.

Next is the Certification Page, which is from your vendor software that includes encryption code and the selected checkbox with your signature on it. And we'll discuss more about the e-signature in a moment.

Moving to slide 47, next is IRIS and this is the Intern and Resident Information System file required for teaching hospitals claiming GME or IME fulltime equivalent on their cost report. This is an unencrypted ZIP file containing a set – a single set of master and assignment DBF files and that's the M and A files.

Next is "Other" where, essentially, all other items go that you may normally submit in the mail to your MAC, but don't have a dedicated slot, whether that's a single file or a ZIP file.

And then, finally, we have the Cover Letter which describes the nature of your submission or if there's anything in particular that you want to address up front to your MACs about the submission you're making.

Going to slide 48. In general, the system will perform specific receivability validation to confirm that your cost report submission is fundamentally sound. So, there'll be certain checks that happened and, if the cost report submission fails any of those checks, the error will be communicated to you on the screen as we saw in the previous screenshot.

If an error is displayed, that cost report will not have been received by your MAC. So, you'll have to resolve that issue to then resubmit successfully to get a received cost report to your MAC. These are not considered rejections and will not follow CMS' formal cost report rejection process.

If a submission as we saw on the success scenario on previous slides, if your submission passes all the receivability validations, you'll get a message that your cost report was received and we'll give you an electronic postmarked date in Eastern Time, as well as a unique e-Filing ID for your reference.

Going to slide 49. You can also encounter warnings in the system as well. And when you encounter a warning after you click "Submit," a pop-up screen will display, and the system will describe what that warning is. When you get a warning, you can either cancel out or choose to proceed forward with it.

So, some examples of warnings you can encounter include if you're filing your cost report after your due date. You'll get a warning saying that you're filing your cost report after your due date, and then, you'll also get one if you attempt to upload an ECR that was not generated using the most updated software available from your cost report vendor.

And next, to submit your cost report timely, you'll need to make sure you do so by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on the date of your due date. So, again, everything is in Eastern Time. So, to be timely, you'll need to submit by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on your due date.

As I mentioned, when we looked at the cost report materials table, you should never encrypt or password protect any of your files. The system is built as a secure portal, in particular, for transmitting your PII and PHI, so do not encrypt or password protect your file.

Duplicate submissions will be rejected by your MAC, regardless of how that duplicate submission is submitted. So, if you submit a duplicate submission, the first one received, it will be the one that your MAC actually uses as your cost report submission. The second one will be rejected the moment the MAC notices it's duplicate.

Going to slide 50. Effective on January 2, 2019, there are only two CMS-approved methods of cost report submissions. That's electronic submission via MCReF, this is the one that we're talking about today, or physical submission via mail or hand delivery.

One thing we talked about earlier is that MCReF can handle the majority of all submissions, but there may be cases where you will be able to submit your cost report. Even though it's acceptable, it may not be receivable in MCReF.

So, for example, if for the submission, you need to submit more than 300 MB, then you'll need to send that in the mail since the system will only allow you to upload a ZIP file that's 300 MB or less. But, in general, that should be acceptable as long as it passes all other checks, but just the system would not be able to receive that.

And then, the last bullet here essentially deals with, if, for some reason, the system is down for maintenance or you're not able to use the system to file based on log-in reasons or whatever the reason may be, you will not be given an extension for system issues preventing you from e-Filing. Essentially, you can always just fall back on mailing in your cost report. And so, there really is no excuse for being late due to the system itself.

Going to slide 51. So, diving in more to electronic signature – which was briefly discussed earlier – in August 2017, CMS issued the 2018 IPPS final rule, which authorized providers to file with an electronic signature of their Worksheet S effective for fiscal years on or after 12/31/2017.

This final rule didn't change who is allowed to sign on the signature line of the Worksheet S, but just dictates that electronic signature is allowed based on when that was effective. CMS has updated all of the transmittals to support e-signature for every MCR form except Home Offices.

So, for versions that do support e-signature, all you need to do in that case is electronically sign and check the box on the Worksheet S, and then you upload that file to the sign Certification Page row when you do your MCReF submission.

If you want to use MCReFs that are filing on the 287-05, which doesn't support e-signature, then you must do both of the following. You'll need to upload a scanned copy of the Worksheet S Certification Page to the signed Certification Page slot when you make your submission in MCReF. And then, you'll also need to mail or hand deliver a hard copy with a signature signed in ink to your MAC. And that must be received by your MAC within 10 days of that MCReF submission. And, just to note, CMS is working on supporting e-signature for Home Offices in the future.

Going to slide 52. The next few slides essentially cover valid and invalid uses of e-signature. And this is not an exhaustive list of what's possible for valid e-signature or invalid e-signature. For specifics, you should definitely reference the 2018 IPPS final rule for guidance on electronic signature. But we wanted to go over a few examples of what is valid and what is invalid.

Going to slide 53. This is an example of a valid use of e-signature. In this case, what CMS has done is on Worksheet S, they've added a checkbox which essentially says that you're agreeing that your electronic signature is your legally binding equivalent of your original signature. So, to use electronic signature, you have to check that box. And then, in this case, the officer of the provider has chosen to type their first and last name into the signature line. So, this is an acceptable form of electronic signature.

Going to slide 54. This is also an acceptable form of electronic signature. In this case, the officer of the provider that signed the Worksheet S has printed out Worksheet S. They have hand checked the box saying that their electronic signature is their legally binding equivalent of their original signature and they hand sign the signature line.

They then scanned that document to make it an electronic file. And then, they could use that to upload to the signed Certification Page row when they did their MCReF submission. So, this is also an acceptable use of e-signature.

Going to slide 55. The next two cases we will go over are invalid uses. In this case, I talked about the importance of this new checkbox that CMS added. The checkbox has to be checked for it to be considered a valid use of e-signature. So, here, since the checkbox is not checked, this is considered an invalid use of electronic signature and would be rejected by your MAC.

Going to slide 56. This is also an invalid use of e-signature. In this case, the officer of the provider has checked the box appropriately electing for e-signature. But, in this case, they haven't provided a first and last name. They've just provided X, 1, 2, 3, which is not a valid first and last name or signature. So, this would be an invalid use of e-signature.

MCReF Provider User Experience

Going to slide 57. That takes us through the updated MCReF functionality, as well as the e-Filing process. And next, we want to discuss some general feedback we have received from providers on their experience using the MCReF system.

Going to slide 58. Since MCReFs go live in 2018, we've had over 28,000 submissions submitted via MCReF, each taking about 2.9 seconds to complete. And given the ease and instant response of the system, users were able to correct any errors without needing extra correspondence with their MAC. The system's timing had also led to faster timing of tentative settlement payment.

In terms of the current year to date, we've had about 40 percent of all MCR submissions being e-Filed through MCReF. Overall, providers have really responded positively with MCReF and the process of e-Filing.

Ongoing Outreach and Education

Going to slide 59. In general, this webinar is just one part of a larger effort to communicate information to the group. They're going to touch on some other resources for outreach and education.

Going to slide 60. Listed on the slide, you can look back at change request 10611 for more information on e-Filing as well as an article link there. Additionally, you can always go to the CMS website as a resource to learn more information as well.

Future MCReF Enhancements

Going to slide 61. Next, we wanted to touch on potential new functionality that would help us continue improving MCReF.

Going to slide 62. First, we're excited to announce that we're working on adding new bulk upload functionality to MCReF, essentially allowing users to upload for multiple cost reports simultaneously. This is something that's been a frequent request from providers. So, we are really looking forward to focusing on that next. And as that progresses, we'll be reaching out to provide more information, so please be on the lookout for that.

Next, as briefly mentioned earlier in the meeting, we've received feedback from providers in various forms, such as during provider testing on other potential items to pursue to continue improving MCReF.

As you can see on the slide, some items include enhancements such as additional information and documentation within MCReF. So, these recommendations have been noted, and we'll be working closely with CMS to analyze and consider them for potential future enhancements.

Going to slide 63. That brings us to the end of our presentation. And now, we wanted to open it up for the Q&A portion of the session where I'll be turning it over to Diane from CMS.

Question & Answer Session

Operator: Diane, you might be on mute.

Diane Maupai: Thank you for that. Thank you, Jolene. We'll now take your questions, excuse me. Please note that this event is being recorded and transcribed. In an effort to get to as many questions as possible, each caller is limited to one question.

To allow more participants the opportunity to ask questions, please send questions specific to your organization to the email on the bottom of your slides so our staff can do more research. Preference will be given to general questions applicable to a larger audience and we will be mindful of the time spent on each question. During the Q&A, we'll respond to questions both from the phone and from email.

All right, Holly. We're ready for our first caller.

Operator: To ask a question via your phone line, please press "star" followed by the number "1" on your touchtone phone. To remove yourself from the queue, please press the "pound" key. Please remember to pick up your handset before asking your questions to assure clarity. Once your line is open, state your name and organization.

Please note your line will remain open during the time you are asking your question. So, anything you say or any background noise will be heard in the conference. If you would like to remove yourself from the queue, please press the "pound" key. Please hold while we compile the Q&A roster. Once again, please hold while we compile the roster.

Okay. Our first question comes from the line of Victoria Cocarina.

Victoria Cocarina: Hi, there. Would you please, if you are able to speak to us, about the CMS loan that was given to us and how should we be recording it in our cost reports?

Owen Osaghae: Hi. This is Owen Osaghae from CMS. There will be additional information coming out from CMS and also from the MACs. But, at this particular time, the – for the – I'm assuming you're talking about the ones that were given to the Part A providers in their accelerated payments . These payments are going to be recouped on the claim. That is the current proposal, but there should be more information coming up from CMS and the MACs about that.

Victoria Cocarina: Thank you very much.

Operator: Our next question will come from the line of Tony Degermik.

Tony Degermik: I was wondering how long are you planning to keep an NPR available, and will you be uploading any previous year NPRs?

Owen Osaghae: I'm not sure I understood the question. Are you – are you saying the ability for you to view the questions on the dashboard?

Tony Degermik: No. When the – when the NPR is complete, how many years would we be able to see for a provider?

Geoff Kuhn: Owen, I think I can address that. This is Geoff with the CGI Federal team. The current system shows years back through fiscal year end 2010 forward, and we will show the NPR status of those years. There is not currently a plan to cut off that history on a rolling basis. So, at least as of right now, it's 2010 forward until further notice.

Tony Degermik: Thank you.

Operator: Our next telephone question comes from the line of Alicia Nedyk.

Alicia Nedyk: Hi. Also, a question with the NPR. So, if a – if a system shows a tentative settlement or NPR is complete, is there a way we can get a copy of that letter or at least like a context just to get a copy for that letter?

Geoff Kuhn: I'm sorry. Can you repeat the question?

Alicia Nedyk: So, in the system, when – for the specific center you're looking at, it says that a tentative settlement or the NPR is completed. Will we be able to have access to get a copy of that letter or is it just saying it's done?

Geoff Kuhn: As of right now, the system will reflect that it is completed, and the formal notice of that will still come to you in the way that it has to date via the formal letter sent to you via the MAC and that will be sent to, you know, your address on record for those types of communications.

There is a discussion. I think we noted it on the future enhancements slide, of considering also providing those delivered through the dashboard itself. But, as of right now, the dashboard is only showing the status and the formal delivery of those documents is going through the process that it goes through today.

Alicia Nedyk: Okay. Thank you.

Diane Maupai: Okay. We're going to turn to Patrick Herrity for a minute.

Patrick Herrity: Sure. So, we have a few email questions that have come into ofmdpaoquestions@cms.hhs.gov. So, if you do have any questions, please do submit it to ofmdpaoquestions@cms.hhs.gov. And we'll go through a couple right now.

First question coming into the email inbox, when registering an EIDM, in some of the questions, the only correct option is to select that we work for the company or we are an employee of that company. Is there another good selection?

Geoff Kuhn: This is Geoff with CSR again. The general idea when registering EIDM is that you are requesting access to an organization's data and their security official is approving it. And so, the correct option is that you are requesting that information, like, as a person working for them, so as an employee of them.

So, even though you may not be directly on their payroll, if you're a certified public accountant, otherwise, you are contracting to them to do work on their behalf. That is the correct option to choose. There's no better one in the EIDM system to select instead.

Patrick Herrity: Okay. The next question from the inbox is also related to EIDM. Why do we need to add our personal Social Security number when registering an EIDM? Can we use our firm's EIN or tax ID instead?

Geoff Kuhn: For this, this is just a general constraint of the EIDM system overall. EIDM is an overarching system for managing access to many different CMS systems. And depending on the application and the security level of that application, and MCReF and PS&R fall onto this boat, to register as an individual with that access, it is required that you provide your Social Security number so that the system can do some basic identity checks in order to confirm that you are who you say you are.

And so, there is no way for you to register just as a company without identifying individually. So, just kind of a restriction of the system and the applications inside it, to register for us, you must provide your Social Security number as part of the verification.

Note that the PS&R and MCReF applications do not receive your Social Security number. It is purely part of the identity management component of the EIDM system in confirming that your identity is who you claim to be.

Patrick Herrity: Thank you. Next question from email. Is there any thought on adding an option within the system to search for an organization by PTAN? The reason I ask is I'm a consultant providing cost reporting to many different agencies and, quite often, they are not easily found during search because sometimes they are listed as a parent or doing business as or tax filing name. Would this ever be a possibility? Thanks for your time.

Geoff Kuhn: From the MCReF application side, hopefully, you saw in our actual dashboard that you can search by either PTAN or provider number. But I'm assuming that this question is related to when you're trying to find those organizations in EIDM and request access to their information, we can pass that request along. We are not aware of any such functionality.

PTAN is also not a unique identifier within EIDM. It's an attribute of the organizations, but it's not how they identify things, so it may be tricky. I would say that, generally, the best thing to do here is to make sure that you're in contact with the security official of the organization that you're trying to associate with because they can tell you exactly how they have set themselves up in EIDM so that when you're searching for them you are making sure you are getting the right version.

Patrick Herrity: All right. Next question from email. Can you please provide MAC contact information for all MAC cost report questions?

Geoff Kuhn: This is Geoff again. For this one, the – we have had a request from the past. As you saw in the dashboard, we indicate when you look at a particular provider, that this is part of this jurisdiction which is currently assigned contractually to this particular MAC.

There's been a discussion and a request from the past that we provide some level of contact information there. And so, we are discussing and pursuing possibly linking to the contact info pages that the MACs themselves maintain.

So, it's on our list to consider. But as of right now, there is nothing in the system other than letting you know who the company is and, for that, you can go to their website and it will have contact information listed for all the different activities including cost reporting, but we'll – there are considerations to try and make that a bit more direct and more formal.

Patrick Herrity: All right. Next question. Are there instructions available on how to add a Home Office to EIDM so they appear in MCReF to e-File?

Geoff Kuhn: For EIDM, the process for adding a Home Office is generally the same as the process for adding any other PTAN or CCN to an organization. We're not aware of any specific extra hurdle for Home Offices.

We have heard this question from a couple of different conversations. And so, if you have attempted to do this and you've had particular problems or run into issues trying to register a Home Office, then perhaps send your specific scenario to the OFMDPAOQUESTIONS inbox and we can coordinate with the External User Services Helpdesk who manages your guys' interactions with EIDM and determine if there is something particularly blocking you.

But also, as part of this, just a reminder that you do need to register the Home Office number separately as part of the process in order to see it in MCReF for filing. There is no automatic linkage between those things. So, it is a necessary step, but if you're having problems doing that, perhaps reach out to us and we'll see if we can determine what's blocking your case.

Patrick Herrity: Thanks, Geoff. As a reminder, again, if you have questions, please send them to ofmdpaoquestions@cms.hhs.gov. Holly, if possible, do we have any phone questions that we can take?

Operator: We do. But as a reminder, if you would like to ask a telephone question, please press "star" then "1" on your telephone keypad. If your question has been asked or you'd like to remove yourself from the queue, press the "pound" key.

Our next question comes from the line of Tiffany Carlin.

Tiffany Carlin: Hi. Thanks so much. I am Tiffany Carlin with Miller Proest. I had sent it via email, but I don't know if that went through.

I, too, like the question earlier, represents hundreds of cost report providers and we prepare cost reports. The EIDM system is usually a user that we can have a – we have our mailroom put together so that we can file

these cost reports electronically. Well, if one person leaves, it's extremely intense then to have somebody else register and then have to re-request hundreds and hundreds of providers to accept.

Is there not a way to have a firm or a consultant register that can be transferred if people are leaving an organization? So, that it's very, very time intensive and not easy to do. So, if we're already pre-registered with hundreds of providers on EIDM, can those be transferred over to another person at the firm without having to go through the process of re-requesting and providers having to accept us? Thank you.

Geoff Kuhn: As of – as of right now, the EIDM system is configured such that it only recognizes and allows the delegation of access from an organization to an individual. And so, at the moment, the way it's set up, there is no mechanism for doing the type of thing you're describing.

But I certainly understand the use case you're describing, and we can pass that feedback along to the system maintainers of EIDM to see if they have any thoughts or considerations of how they might make that use case more straightforward in the future.

Owen Osaghae: This is Owen. Just to add a little bit. There is an enhancement in the EIDM to be able to request access to more than one organization at a time. So, you should be able to request from a number of organizations that you represent, at the same time without having to wait for an approval from each one before requesting in this one.

Geoff Kuhn: And I know – and I do believe the multi-request at a time that you can have multiple in queue is currently in place. But you still have to go through and make each of those requests individually.

Owen Osaghae: Yes.

Tiffany Carlin: Right. Okay. Thanks. But, yes, thank you for taking that recommendation.

Operator: And again, to ask a telephone question, please press "star" then "1" on your telephone keypad. Again, "star," "1" to come into the question queue. And at this time, I have no question from the telephone lines.

Patrick Herrity: Okay. Thanks, Holly. We'll take a question from the email inbox next then. Next question is, can we download the tentative lump sum review work and NPR letters through MCReF?

Geoff Kuhn: I think we touched on this briefly from one of the questions that came in over the line. But for all of these work papers, right now, they're not available through the system. But we do have enhancements to consider, incorporating that information at MCReF so that you can download those letters.

But at least, for right now, it's not – and then there's discussion of doing something like that to make all of those papers and official documents sort of centralized in MCReF and an easy place for you to come and get that information.

Patrick Herrity: All right. Next question from email. How long does it take for MCReF to get updated to current PECOS information?

Geoff Kuhn: On the systems side, there is no direct feed from PECOS to MCReF. The providers manage their enrollments through PECOS. That information is communicated to the staff that runs and maintains STAR and audits your cost reports. So, there is a – there's some lag there in terms of those MPs communicating.

Once the audit staff have been made aware of the change and they enter that information into STAR, then MCReF reflects that within a couple of hours. So, as we noted on one of the prior slides, if you are trying to do something in MCReF and you know that you've communicated change through PECOS, you've altered your enrollment, you've gone through a change of ownership, whatever it happens to be, you know that that's officially recorded.

But you're not seeing that change in MCReF, then make sure your profile is set up correctly in EIDM. And if all that's squared away, reach out to your audit MAC and let them know that you have this formal tie-in notice that this change has gone through, because they may not have gotten it yet or it may, like, have not been copied to them. Sometimes it gets sent to the wrong organizations. Make sure they're aware of that formal documentation, and then they'll be able to input the data and get MCReF to reflect the change.

Patrick Herrity: All right. Next question from email. Are there any plans to increase the other file limit of 300 MB due to the requirement that we now include patient-level detail information for bad debt dish and Worksheet S10?

Geoff Kuhn: One reminder about the 300 limit is that it is after you've already added all of your other files into a ZIP file and they've been compressed. So, depending on the volume of data that you're submitting, it's not 300 MB of uncompressed detailed data of these sorts, it's 300 MB after you've already put it in a ZIP file.

If you're still running into that limit and doing so on a regular basis due to the expansion of the amount of information being collected as part of the cost report submission, I would, one, still send things in through the mail.

If you need the file today and you're hitting a 300-megabyte limit, it goes through the mail. But if that is happening now and you see that that's going to happen next year and the year after that, communicate that to your MAC and we can start discussions around increasing that limit. If the norm has gotten larger, we may need to make an upgrade or a tweak on our side to support those larger files.

Patrick Herrity: Okay. Next question. Will the MACs responses be available on MCReF and then, follow up, are the cost reports and the attachments, are they available to view after e-Filing?

Geoff Kuhn: For this one, the MACs' responses in terms of whether or not they've accepted your cost report or what we showed in the dashboard today, that is something you'll be able to see. But you'll only be able to see the overall status change. This cost report has been accepted; this cost report has been rejected for these specific reasons. But the full details of that rejection will still be what is communicated to you by the MAC via their existing process.

When they perform a desk review and they perform the desk review and they're making adjustments, you can see that the desk review happened in STAR. But you won't be able to see the exact nature of any desk review adjustments that were made as part of that process. In terms of being able to see the responses in MCReF, for

the materials that you upload, as of right now, we do not make anything that you upload available for download. That's part of our security model.

But just, in general, that you're able to upload things to us and we will deliver them to the MACs. But we are not opening that up to then be available to anyone who would have access to file to then be able to access and download. So, as of right now, there is no download capability for the materials that you upload to MCReF.

Patrick Herrity: Okay. Continuing with email. Can the signature box be checked physically versus electronically?

Geoff Kuhn: For the signature page, yes. You can print the page, check the box, and sign your name and then scan it. You can check the box via your cost report software, print the unsigned page, sign it, and scan it. You can check it and type your name and file electronically. All of those are valid combinations as long as the resulting electronic document that your MAC receives reflects a checked box and a validly signed signature line.

Patrick Herrity: Next question from email. If we refile a cost report in MCReF, but are not revising the IRIS, should we resubmit IRIS? Could a drop-down button on the IRIS section of MCReF be added to say if IRIS is being resubmitted?

Geoff Kuhn: For MCReF today, when filing an amendment of any sort, you should file the complete cost report. In general, the entire submission together is taken as the cost report. And so, you're not just submitting one revised copy, you're submitting an amended cost report and therefore, even if nothing in your IRIS changed, if you're a teaching facility and you're submitting an amended cost report, you should be submitting the IRIS that supports that cost report within that same submission.

Patrick Herrity: Okay. Next question. For Home Health Agencies, once we submit the cost report via MCReF, do we need to send an original signature page in addition to the one uploaded on the website?

Geoff Kuhn: At this point, no. If you're filing on the current Home Health cost report version, it supports electronic signature directly. The only thing you have to do is upload the properly electronically signed copy to the assigned certification slot. The only cost report form which still requires a separate submission of the paper copy through the mail is if you're filing the Home Office on the 287-05 Home Office cost statement form.

Patrick Herrity: Next question. Is there any way to look up a provider by security official's name as opposed to name of facility and or state?

Geoff Kuhn: There's not, currently, any functionality to do so. If you are having difficulty identifying a particular organization, you can reach out to the EUS helpdesk. They may be able to provide some assistance and determine if there is a security official.

But if you know the security official's name and you're trying to find the organization, I would think the best thing is to reach out to that security official and ask them what they named their organization and what their identifier is within the EIDM.

Patrick Herrity: All right. Next question. We were unable to use MCReF for some of our hospital cost reports because of rural health clinics that became provider based during the cost report year. Are there any plans to allow such submissions in the future?

Geoff Kuhn: I'm not aware of any restriction with – within MCReF that prevents that sort of cost report submission. I believe if there are issues with your cost report form or otherwise that prevents you from filling it out and required you to do something slightly separate, I can't quite speak to that. There's nothing inherent to MCReF that says you cannot file a cost report with a based RHC.

The – other than that I would say it sounds like a very specific thing and the details of that you may want to submit to OFMDPAOQUESTIONS with more details about your particular scenario. And then, we can point you to the MAC or point you to other resources that might better address that.

Owen Osaghae: Just – this is Owen with CMS just to add a little bit. It could be that when the facility changed from first standing to provider based, the tie-in notice has not been received by the MAC and that status of that provider has not been changed in our STAR system. So, you might want to confirm with the MAC that they have received the tie-in notice for that particular change from provider based – from freestyle to provider based.

Patrick Herrity: All right. Next question. I'm a consultant that prepares and submits multiple cost reports. Does the P&SR SO have to approve me as an MCReF-approved cost report filer role in order for me to be able to submit their cost report?

Geoff Kuhn: This is Geoff. The easy answer is yes. For all the ones that you want to file for the SO, you need to request MCReF-approved cost report filer and have the SO approve that role request. In theory, they could set up you up as a backup security official if, for some reason, you have a very, like, close business relationship and they want you to be more actively involved in managing it. But as long as you're just a third-party coming in, that's the most likely role that would make sense and that's what would need to happen.

Patrick Herrity: Okay. We have a few more questions. Just as a reminder, again, if you have questions that you'd like to ask, please email them to ofmdpaoquestions@cms.hhs.gov. And even once the webinar or this event is over, you can still continue to send those questions in, and we'll be able to respond to them.

Next question from email. I logged in to MCReF and received the following error, "No providers at your organization qualify for use in MCReF." I'm a security official from multiple organizations. How do I connect them to MCReF?

Geoff Kuhn: For this specific use case, I think I would say we need to look at your particular account and your specific set up. There's nothing, in general, that has to be done. If those same providers are set up for use in PS&R, then you should see those providers for use in MCReF.

But there are scenarios where providers are not able to file. For example, if it's a consolidated FQHC or yours are, for some reason, set up as subunits, then they do not qualify for MCReF. They would never have qualified for MCReF. But, again, that would be very specific to your scenario, and I think we'd want to look at your providers that you're registered for and try to work through your account issues individually.

Patrick Herrity: All right. Next question from email. If you have multiple support files to upload, how would that be done?

Geoff Kuhn: If we're generally referring to bad debt files and otherwise, audited financial statements and so forth that you are – that don't fit our normal slots, they're not the ECR, they're not the PII, they're not IRIS, all of those things go into "Other." And to put them all in together, you need to place them in a ZIP file so that they're packaged as a single item and then attach that ZIP file to the other slot.

Patrick Herrity: Next question. What is the direct link to file with MCReF?

Geoff Kuhn: I believe the URL for the system is in the presentation. But simple enough – it's just mcref.cms.gov.

Matt Canniere: Hey, Geoff. It's Matt. Can you hear me?

Geoff Kuhn: Yes.

Matt Canniere: I know we spoke to it earlier, but we are getting a lot of questions about support for additional documentation like MCR letters, kind of the set-up of letters, future enhancements of that sorts. Can you just speak to that again, where we're at with that?

Geoff Kuhn: Sure. As noted, right now, MCReF is only tracking the status of the different activities through the activities we're talking about before where we've had providers come in and test the system and give us feedback about the functionality and through outreach, through groups like this and through previous webinars. We have heard a common request of wanting to be able to get those documents and so, that is on the list of items that CMS is currently considering in terms of where to go next.

We stated upfront that one of CMS' goals is to increase utilization of MCReF, which you guys get more of the benefits of being able to e-File and have the improved speed of the process overall, but also, trying to make more and better functionality available to you through MCReF. This dashboard is a first big piece of that.

Bulk upload support for people who deal with many customers at once is the next item like that that we're working on. And then, considering bringing in things like tentative letters and NPR letters and making them accessible to you through the system is one of those items that's on the short list of consideration as to where CMS might want to go next.

And so, the feedback from everyone on this call where we're seeing that repeatedly brought up is part of the input to CMS' consideration down the line as to what things they want to try and do next to continue improving this and making the experience better for providers.

Patrick Herrity: Okay. One slide I wanted to point out to everybody, again, on slide 64, there's the email inbox and then at the bottom of various slides previous to that of ofmdpaoquestions@cms.hhs.gov. I know we've got about five minutes, but you can continue to send questions to that inbox.

Also, if you have any specific questions relating to your EIDM account or getting access to EIDM, role requests, passwords, annual certifications or research, and logging in, you can contact the EUS Support Helpdesk and that's also on slide 64.

We do have a few more questions from email, so let me see if I can dive into a couple more of those with the few minutes left.

Will the MCReF system be updated to allow for communication and made a request to and from MAC auditors so that the whole process is enclosed in the same system?

Geoff Kuhn: That's also another request that we've heard. We haven't heard that as frequently as the request to have documents downloaded. But there's some consideration of incorporating request for additional documents and the provider being able to respond with those additional documents and clarifying documentation as part of it.

But there's – I would say, there's less concrete thought about how that might work and whether or not that's a direction for us to go. But the feedback is useful and it's certainly on the list of something that will be considered in the future.

Patrick Herrity: All right. Next question. If you don't file electronically, will you still be able to track the progress of your cost report?

Geoff Kuhn: Yes, absolutely. The dashboard functionality is for all cost reports 2010 onward. So, for things that you have previously done prior to MCReF, even existing things that you're doing today where you're still sending them through the mail, things you're doing through MCReF going forward, all of the status of those cost reports will be reflected in the dashboard along with the different submissions that you received. We'll also indicate via the e-Filing ID if this is one that came through MCReF, but they will all be in there to reflect your ongoing communication with the MAC for the last 10 years.

Patrick Herrity: Okay. Let's see if we can do a couple more. If e-Filing a scanned copy of a wet signature, do we still need to mail the wet signature page to our MAC?

Geoff Kuhn: Generally, no, for everyone except Home Office. If you are e-Filing a scanned copy of a wet signature, that is a validly signed form as long as you check the box and write your name and scan that document, you put that into MCReF and you're done.

The only people who still need to send in the wet signature on a piece of paper are for filing Home Office cost statements. And then, that's something that CMS is working toward a new version that will support electronic signature for Home Offices as well.

Patrick Herrity: All right. Let's see if we can do one more. I'm an employee of the CPA that prepares cost reports for many Medicare clients. Through EIDM and MCReF, will my firm be able to submit cost reports on behalf of our clients? Will the firm be able to e-sign the cost report we prepare for our client or will the client need to sign them before the firm submits them on their behalf?

Geoff Kuhn: So, two parts here. The first part, through EIDM and MCReF, will your firm be able to submit cost reports on behalf of your clients? If your provider authorizes you as an MCReF-approved cost report filer, that is what enables you to file on their behalf, so absolutely to that. If you register for that role, that is the provider sort of designating you that authority on their behalf.

To the other half, will you be able to e-sign it on their behalf? The – we referenced the IPPS rule that established the allowance of e-signature. It very specifically points out that it does not alter any of the rules around who is allowed to be the signatory on a cost report. And so, I would refer you back to those guidelines. Nothing about MCReF or e-signature alters the appropriate signatories for a cost report.

Patrick Herrity: Okay. Thank you, Geoff Kuhn. I think, at this point, we're at towards the end of the call. So, I think I'll pass it back to Diane to close out the call. Thank you, everyone, for your questions.

Additional Information

Diane Maupai: Yes, thank you. That's all the time we have for questions today. If you have additional questions, you can see that resources on slide 60 and also, you'll find contacts on slide 64.

We hope you'll take a few minutes to evaluate your experience today. See slide 65 for more information. An audio recording and transcript will be available in about two weeks at go.cms.gov/mln-events. Again, my name is Diane Maupai and I'd like to thank our presenters and also, you, for participating in today's call. Have a great day.

Operator: Thank you for participating in today's conference call. You may now disconnect. Presenters, please hold.