Medicare Ground Ambulance Data Collection System: March 29, 2022 Question and Answer Session

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Agenda

1. Medicare Ground Ambulance Data Collection System (GADCS) Overview
2. GADCS Testing Update
3. GADCS Data Collection Timeline and Requirements
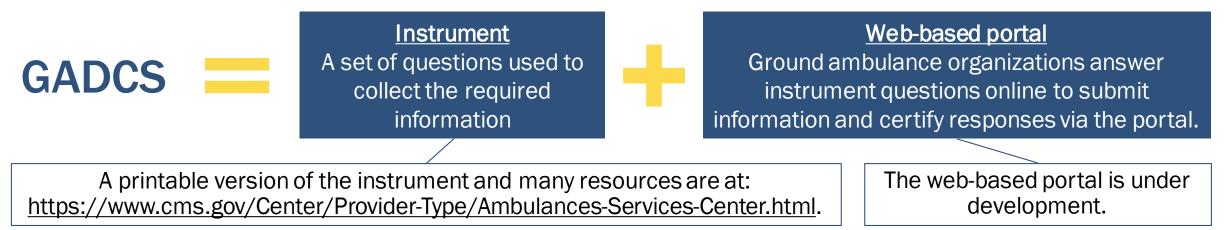4. Live Question and Answer (Q&A)

GADCS Overview

Maria Durham (CMS)

Why is CMS collecting data from ambulance organizations?

- Section 1834(l)(17) of the Social Security Act requires CMS to collect cost, revenue, utilization, and other information from representative samples of ground ambulance providers and suppliers ("organizations").

What is the GADCS?

- CMS developed the Medicare Ground Ambulance Data Collection System (GADCS) to meet the requirements in Section 1834(l)(17) of the Act.
- The GADCS consists of two interconnected components:

GADCS **=**

Instrument
A set of questions used to collect the required information

+

Web-based portal
Ground ambulance organizations answer instrument questions online to submit information and certify responses via the portal.

A printable version of the instrument and many resources are at: https://www.cms.gov/Center/Provider-Type/Ambulances-Services-Center.html.

The web-based portal is under development.

Which organizations need to collect and report data?

- CMS samples a quarter of ambulance organizations annually, four years in a row.
  - Sampling is based on National Provider Identifier (NPI).
  - Eligible NPIs billed Medicare for a ground ambulance service in a recent year.
  - Nearly all ground ambulance NPIs will be selected over the four-year period.
  - Organizations will only be selected once during the four-year period at this time.
- CMS already selected and posted list of the first <u>two</u> ("Year 1" and "Year 2") of four samples.
  - Lists of selected NPIs are on the Ambulances Services Center website: https://www.cms.gov/Center/Provider-Type/Ambulances-Services-Center.html
  - CMS, through its contractors, is in the process of sending out notification letters for Year 1 and Year 2 NPIs.
- CMS will select and post the third and fourth samples ("Year 3" and "Year 4") at a later time.

My NPI was selected. Do we have to participate?

- **In short, yes:**
  - Sampled organizations are required by law to sufficiently collect and report data.
  - Organizations that do not sufficiently report data will receive a 10% payment reduction for Medicare Ambulance Fee Schedule services provided during the next calendar year.
- **Your participation is important:**
  - Congress required the Medicare Payment Advisory Committee (MedPAC) to assess the adequacy of Medicare ambulance payment rates using GADCS data.
  - We believe MedPAC will be best positioned to assess on the adequacy of payment for ground ambulance services if they have complete and accurate data from all types of ground ambulance organizations.
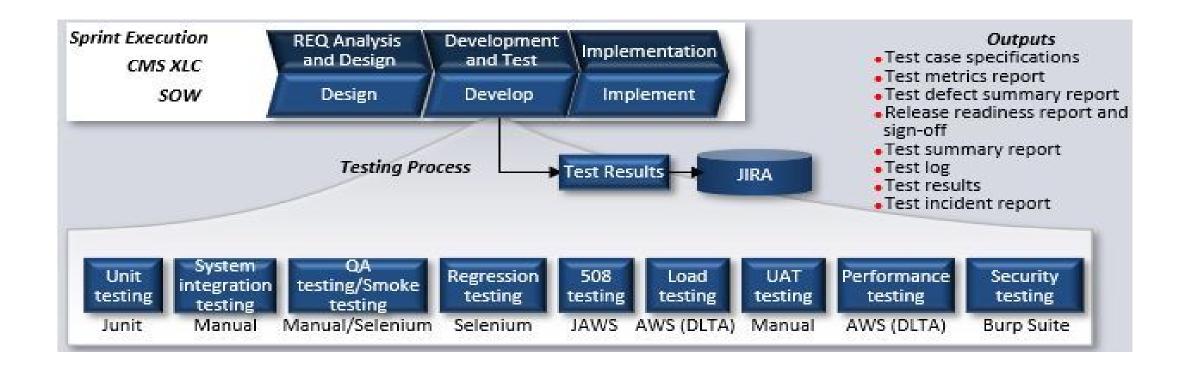
GADCS Testing Update

Maria Durham (CMS)

GADCS Characteristics

- GADCS is a new web-based, interactive ambulance data collection system with a modernized, rules-based engine.
- GADCS provides an easy-to-use user interface for data submission by organizations.
- GADCS provides standard and ad hoc analysis/reporting capability.
- GADCS provides limited file upload functionality.

Testing Approach

Sprint Execution
CMS XLC
SOW

REQ Analysis and Design	Development and Test	Implementation
Design	Develop	Implement

Testing Process → Test Results → JIRA

Outputs
- Test case specifications
- Test metrics report
- Test defect summary report
- Release readiness report and sign-off
- Test summary report
- Test log
- Test results
- Test incident report

Unit testing	System integration testing	QA testing/Smoke testing	Regression testing	508 testing	Load testing	UAT testing	Performance testing	Security testing
Junit	Manual	Manual/Selenium	Selenium	JAWS	AWS (DLTA)	Manual	AWS (DLTA)	Burp Suite

Cognitive Testing:
1) Completed one round of cognitive testing on the Instrument Questions.
2) Another round planned during UAT.

Early preview (Fall 21) and formal UAT (Spring 22) Validation Testing

User Test Timeline

Instrument Development Pretest & Cognitive Testing 1
(Jan.-Feb. 2019 & Feb.-Mar. 2021)

Early GADCS Preview Testing
(November 2021)

User Acceptability Testing & Cognitive Testing 2
(Apr.-May 2022)

Go Live
(January 2023)

GADCS Early Preview User Testing

"I think overall the portal was very user friendly. I have just a couple of suggestions. If you have to go back or exit out in the middle of a section, it would be nice for you to not have to start back at the beginning of the section—You should be able to start back where you left off. Also I think having more of the dotted line definitions or further instructions would be very handy. When I was testing the portal I printed out the pdf version and referred back to that many times, because it had more detailed information about some of the questions."

"Overall the process was REALLY smooth. The individual modules were linked thoroughly. I don't have any questions on the online reporting process."

We participated in the GADSCS testing period with some sample data. In general I found the system easy to use and some of the nice features I noticed included:
Easily accessible definitions/standards on the same page as a question. It's convenient to have them at hand instead of having to refer back to the PDF
Multiple ways of entering ZIPs (we have a wide service area) and I had a lot input. Being able to choose paste in saved lots of time
There was a brief moment of confusion but selecting that my NPI was incorrect (it is correct, just testing) ..
The most significant point for improvement was being able to skip around sections since this data is going to need some collaboration between offices here was handled during the Q&A session so no work needed there. Thanks and good job!

GADCS Early Preview User Testing Next Steps

Now that this testing phase is over, we are reviewing the feedback and making requested modifications.

- We will address any defects identified during testing as well as roll out requested features. Examples include: navigation within sections, allowing users to enter zero for interest payments.

- We learned several lessons about participation and response rates and how to encourage more participation.
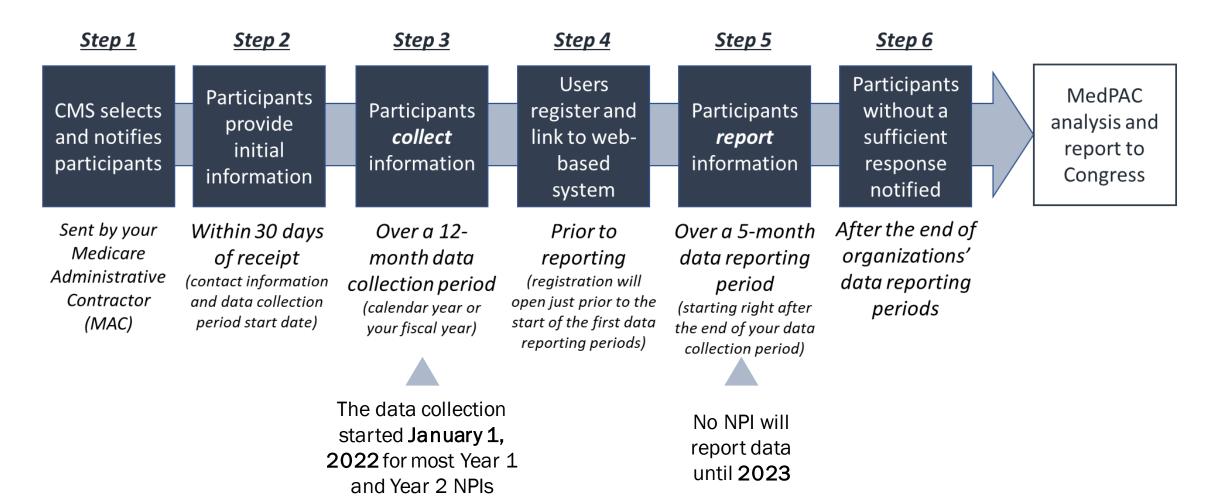
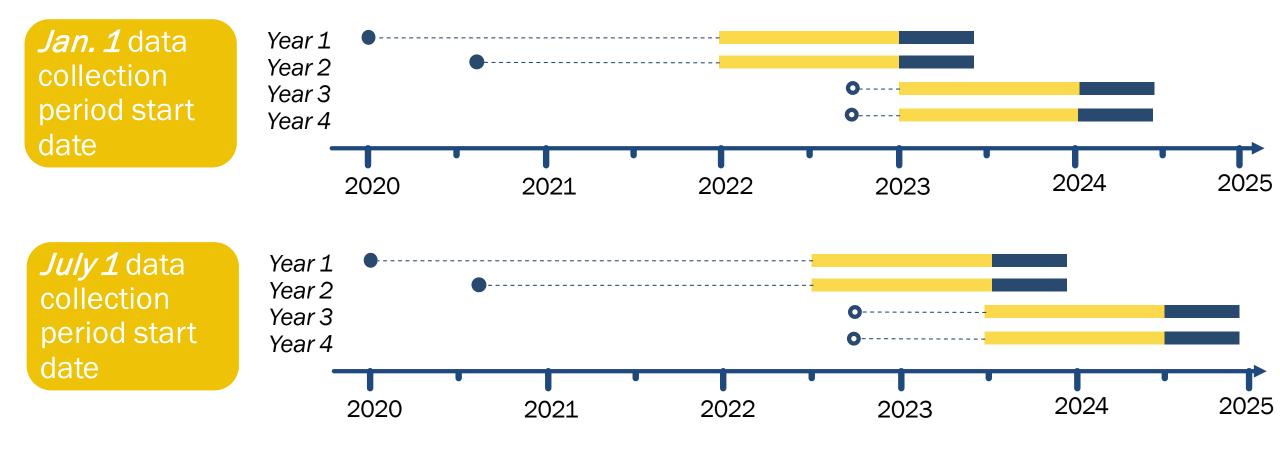We will apply these lessons for our **User Acceptance Testing** planned for the spring of this year.

GADCS Data Collection Timeline and Requirements

Andrew Mulcahy (RAND)

What's the process for GADCS?

Step 1	*Step 2*	*Step 3*	*Step 4*	*Step 5*	*Step 6*	
CMS selects and notifies participants	Participants provide initial information	Participants *collect* information	Users register and link to web-based system	Participants *report* information	Participants without a sufficient response notified	MedPAC analysis and report to Congress

Step 1 — *Sent by your Medicare Administrative Contractor (MAC)*

Step 2 — *Within 30 days of receipt* (contact information and data collection period start date)

Step 3 — *Over a 12-month data collection period* (calendar year or your fiscal year)

The data collection started **January 1, 2022** for most Year 1 and Year 2 NPIs

Step 4 — *Prior to reporting* (registration will open just prior to the start of the first data reporting periods)

Step 5 — *Over a 5-month data reporting period* (starting right after the end of your data collection period)

No NPI will report data until **2023**

Step 6 — *After the end of organizations' data reporting periods*

When exactly do we have to collect and report information?

Jan. 1 data collection period start date

Year 1
Year 2
Year 3
Year 4

2020   2021   2022   2023   2024   2025

July 1 data collection period start date

Year 1
Year 2
Year 3
Year 4

2020   2021   2022   2023   2024   2025

● Sample selected (list already posted)
○ Sample selected (planned)
▬ Organizations collecting data
▬ Organizations reporting data

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What information will I need to collect and report?

Organizational Characteristics

Section 2: Organizational Characteristics
Section 3: Service Area
Section 4: Emergency Response Time

Services Provided

Section 5: Ground Ambulance Service Volume
Section 6: Service Mix

Information on Costs

Section 7: Labor Costs
Section 8: Facilities Costs
Section 9: Vehicle Costs
Section 10: Equipment, Consumable, and Supply Costs
Section 11: Other Costs
Section 12: Total Costs

Information on Revenue

Section 13: Revenues

CMS developed several resources to help organizations collect data, including:
- A "Quick Reference Guide"
- Overview and detailed webinars
- A full, printable version of the questions you'll have to answer (the "instrument")

All these resources are available on the Ambulances Services Center website:
https://www.cms.gov/Center/Provider-Type/Ambulances-Services-Center.html

What do I need to know while collecting data?

- In general, you should collect information on expenses, revenue, and services for your **entire** ground ambulance organization, not just services delivered to Medicare beneficiaries.

- The expenses, revenue, and services that you report should cover the **entire 12-month data collection period.**

- Unless specified in the instructions, **do not report estimates** or "best guesses."

- Much of the required information will be already tracked by your organization. **You may need to start collecting some new information.**

- If you provide other types of services ((e.g., you are a fire-based organization or a hospital), you will likely need to **allocate** many of your costs and revenues to those specific to ground ambulance services.

- You may need to **collect cost information from outside your ground ambulance organization** in some cases (e.g., if your municipality pays for facilities, utilities, or benefits).

Where can I get more information and help?

- There are many resources on the Ambulances Services Center website: https://www.cms.gov/Center/Provider-Type/Ambulances-Services-Center

Resource	Direct Link
GADCS Quick Reference Guide	https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Medicare-Fee-for-Service-Payment/AmbulanceFeeSchedule/Downloads/Medicare-Ground-Ambulance-Quick-Reference.pdf
GADCS Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)	https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Medicare-Fee-for-Service-Payment/AmbulanceFeeSchedule/Downloads/Medicare-Ground-Ambulance-FAQs.pdf
A printable version of the Medicare Ground Ambulance Data Collection Instrument (in English and Spanish)	English: https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Medicare-Fee-for-Service-Payment/AmbulanceFeeSchedule/Downloads/Medicare-Ground-Ambulance-Data-Collection-System-Instrument.pdf Spanish: https://www.cms.gov/files/document/medicare-ground-ambulance-data-collection-instrument-printable-spanish-version-posted-02102022.pdf
Prior educational webinars and Q&A sessions	Listed directly on the Ambulances Services Center website

- Contact AmbulanceDataCollection@cms.hhs.gov for ground ambulance data collection inquiries.
- Contact AmbulanceODF@cms.hhs.gov for other ambulance services inquiries.

Live Q&A

Maria Durham (CMS)

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GADCS Live Q&A (March 29, 2022)

Live Q&A Instructions: *This slide lists common questions and answers and is the only slide for the live Q&A portion of the session. Presenters will read and answer other questions verbally.* Click the "Q&A" button at the bottom of your Zoom screen to submit a question. If selected, presenters will read your question and respond during the session. CMS will respond to unanswered questions by email.

Note: Answers to many general questions are at the Ambulances Services Center webpage:
https://www.cms.gov/Center/Provider-Type/Ambulances-Services-Center

Frequently Asked Question	Answer
1. Has my organization been selected to participate?	1. Lists of selected organizations are at the website above. CMS is in the process of notifying selected organizations via email or regular mail.
2. What if my organization isn't on the year 1 or year 2 lists?	2. It is very likely that your organization will be selected in a future year. CMS will announce when it selects year 3 and year 4 organizations.
3. Is participation required?	3. Yes. Organizations that do not sufficiently submit data will receive a 10% payment reduction.
4. When will we need to collect and report data?	4. The FAQ at the website above includes examples. In brief, organizations *collect* data over a continuous 12-month period and *report* data within 5 months after the data collection period ends.
5. How do I inform CMS of our data collection period start date?	5. Notification letters will have instructions on reporting your data collection period start date to a Medicare Administrative Contractor. The period can align with the calendar year or your fiscal year.
6. How do we report data?	6. CMS is developing a web-based portal that will launch in late 2022. CMS will share more information, including training sessions, when available.