

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services



How to Use The Medicare Coverage Database



To Learn More...

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<http://www.cms.gov/medicare-coverage-database>

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INTRODUCTION

What is the Medicare Coverage Database (MCD)?

The searchable MCD contains all Medicare National Coverage Determinations (NCDs), National Coverage Analyses (NCAs), Local Coverage Determinations (LCDs), and local articles. NCAs include proposed NCD decisions. The MCD also includes Coding Analyses for Labs (CALs), Medicare Evidence Development & Coverage Advisory Committee (MEDCAC) proceedings, and Medicare coverage guidance documents. Definitions of these terms are found on page 5 of this booklet.

Why Would a Health Care Professional, Supplier, or Provider Use the Coverage Database?

All health care providers should be knowledgeable about Medicare coverage prior to providing services or items to Medicare beneficiaries. Because extensive coverage information is readily available, health care providers are presumed to have the requisite knowledge of likely Medicare denial of payment. If a provider has not given a beneficiary proper advance notice in writing that Medicare will likely deny payment and Medicare denies a claim for a service as not reasonable and necessary or as constituting custodial care, the provider will be held financially liable. However, if a provider gives the beneficiary proper written advance notice that Medicare will likely deny payment for the service or item and indicates this action on the claim, the beneficiary may be held liable.

Background: Medicare Coverage and Coverage Determinations

The Social Security Act (the Act) is the primary authority for all coverage provisions and subsequent policies. Medicare coverage is limited to items and services that are reasonable and necessary for the diagnosis or treatment of an illness or injury and within the scope of a Medicare benefit category. LCDs are the vast majority of Medicare coverage determinations. In certain cases, however, Medicare deems it appropriate to develop an NCD for an item or service to be applied on a national basis for all Medicare beneficiaries meeting the criteria for coverage.

How Up-to-Date is the MCD?

The national coverage information in the MCD is updated in real time, except the national coverage download, which is updated weekly. The local coverage information is updated on a weekly basis, usually on Thursdays. Subscribers to the CMS Coverage electronic mailing list receive weekly notification when national coverage documents are updated. In addition, you should subscribe to your Medicare Fee-For-Service (FFS) Contractor electronic mailing list in order to be notified of new or changing LCDs.

How to Locate the MCD

The MCD is located at <http://www.cms.gov/medicare-coverage-database> on the CMS website. The MCD is also one of the top links on the CMS website home page.

USING THE MCD

Figure 1 displays a portion of the MCD Overview page.



Figure 1: MCD Overview Page

Navigation Bar Options

The navigation bar appears at the top of each MCD page and identifies multiple ways to locate and view data. When a navigation bar option is selected, it is shown in orange.

Advanced Search

This option allows you to explore national and local coverage documents using a variety of criteria such as keyword, diagnosis/procedure code, and date. Note that the MCD Overview page also features a Quick Search option.

Indexes

The Indexes provide pre-defined lists of national and local coverage documents, such as:

- NCDs by chapter/section and alphabetically,
- LCDs and articles by contractor, state, and alphabetically,
- Local coverage contacts and links to Medicare FFS Contractor websites, and
- Open or closed NCAs.

Reports

This feature provides reports of national and local coverage data, such as what's new in national coverage, LCD reports, and annual reports.

Downloads

Download complete sets of LCDs or NCDs using this option.

Basket

The basket tool allows you to view, print, or e-mail saved documents from a search.

MCD Help

The MCD offers help links located at the top right corner of each MCD web page beside the navigation bar. 'Page Help' offers helpful information for the particular module. 'Contextual Help' offers section-specific help when you hover over a section of a page. It can be turned on by clicking the 'Contextual Help is Off' link.

SEARCH

The Search features are the most commonly used methods to search the MCD since they are useful in reviewing policies by keyword(s). This section explains how to use the Quick Search feature and also how to perform an Advanced Search.

Using the Quick Search Feature

Figure 2 displays the Quick Search feature which is located on the right of the MCD Overview page. You may search by document ID or by document type.

1

The document ID search option provides a quick way to execute a search for a specific determination. Enter the document ID and then click 'Search By ID.' This type of search is efficient because it returns only the document needed.

Helpful Hint: Because you must know the exact ID, using document ID is most helpful for a previously referenced document where you have saved the document number and are subsequently referencing it to determine if any changes have occurred. The document ID can be found at the beginning of a coverage determination. When performing an ID search, the entire ID must be specified, including any letters or dashes.

1

*Document ID:

SEARCH BY ID

2

OR BY DOCUMENT TYPE:

- National and Local Coverage Documents
- National Coverage Documents
- Local Coverage Documents

*Select Geographic Area/Region:

Select Area

[View county listings for split states](#)
[View region descriptions](#)

*Select One or Both:

Enter Keyword(s) (Title Only)

AND/OR

Enter CPT/HCPCS Code

[Need more search power? Try Advanced Search](#)

RESET SELECTION CRITERIA

SEARCH BY TYPE

Figure 2: MCD Overview Page Quick Search Feature

2

If the document ID is unknown, a coverage document may be searched by document type using several criteria.

- Select the option for:
 - Both National and Local Coverage Documents (The site defaults to this selection.),
 - National Coverage Documents, or
 - Local Coverage Documents.
- Select a geographic area/region from the dropdown menu if searching for a local coverage document or both national and local coverage documents. In addition to states, CMS regions can be selected. This option does not appear if searching for NCDs only, as the geographic area is not needed for this search.
- Insert a keyword or keywords. Keyword searches are not case sensitive.
- If searching for local coverage documents, you may enter a CPT/HCPCS code instead of or in addition to any keywords.

Figure 3 displays a portion of the Quick Search results after selecting the National Coverage Documents search option, entering cardiac as the keyword, and clicking 'Search By Type' to begin the search.

The screenshot shows the 'Your Search Results' page with 30 records. The search criteria are: Document Types: NCA, CAL, NCD, MEDCAC, TA, MCD; Keyword: Cardiac; Keyword Lookup Type: Title search; Keyword Search Type: All Words. There are buttons for 'Modify Your Search', 'New Search', 'Expand All', 'Collapse All', '0 Document(s) Selected', 'Print Selected', 'Add to Basket', and 'Select All Records'. A red box highlights the 'Expand All' and 'Collapse All' buttons. A table titled 'National Coverage Determinations (NCDs)' with 8 records is shown. The table has columns for 'NCD SECTION', 'NCD TITLE', and 'SELECT ALL'. The first row is highlighted with a red box around the sorting triangles. Three callout boxes are present: '1' points to the first row title, '2' points to the 'SELECT ALL' checkbox, and '3' points to the 'Print Selected' button.

NCD SECTION	NCD TITLE	SELECT ALL
10.6	Anesthesia in CARDIAC Pacemaker Surgery	<input type="checkbox"/>
20.25	CARDIAC Catheterization Performed in Other than a Hospital Setting	<input type="checkbox"/>
20.16	CARDIAC Output Monitoring by Thoracic Electrical Bioimpedance (TEB)	<input type="checkbox"/>
20.8.1	CARDIAC Pacemaker Evaluation Services	<input type="checkbox"/>
20.8	CARDIAC Pacemakers	<input type="checkbox"/>

Figure 3: Quick Search Results

Results are displayed in a list format. Select 'Expand All' to view all of the results. Select '+' or '-' to expand or collapse the results for a document type. To reorder the results, use the sorting triangles for each column.

- 1 To view a coverage determination of interest, click on the title. If a document contains Current Procedural Terminology (CPT) or Current Dental Terminology (CDT) codes, you must accept the American Medical Association (AMA) User Agreement before you can view the document.
- 2 To add an item to your basket, select the checkbox in the right column corresponding to the document. Then, select 'Add to Basket.' To view the items in your basket, click the 'Basket' option in the navigation bar.
- 3 To print document(s), select the checkbox in the right column corresponding to the document(s). Click 'Print Selected.'

Helpful Hint: Items in your basket are lost once the browser is closed. Your basket will be empty each time the browser is restarted. Select the 'Email Basket' button to e-mail the contents of your basket to yourself for future reference.

National coverage documents are grouped under the following headings:

- **NCDs,**
- **NCA,**
- **CALs,**
- **MEDCAC Meetings,**
- **TAs,** and
- **Medicare Coverage Documents.**

Note that MEDCAC information, TAs, and Medicare coverage documents cannot be searched using the document ID search.

NCDs may include links to Medicare claims processing transmittals containing Claims Processing Instructions (CPIs).

If a search includes LCDs, the following document types would also be displayed:

- **Articles,** and
- **LCDs.**

Articles contain coding or other guidelines that complement an LCD.



Helpful Hint: A Key Article is designated to be the primary source of information relating to a specific topic or subject matter. Key Articles are identified by a key icon.

LCDs are decisions by Medicare FFS Contractors whether to cover a particular service in its jurisdictional area in accordance with §1862(a)(1) of the Social Security Act. LCDs may only be developed in the absence of a specific statute, regulation, national coverage policy, national coding policy, or as an adjunct to a national coverage policy. If a search is limited to LCDs, only articles and LCDs are identified.

To revise the search criteria, click the 'Modify Your Search' link or select the 'Back to Overview and Quick Search' link at the top of the page. Click 'New Search' to delete the selection criteria from the previous search and begin a new search.

Quick Search results include only currently in effect documents. Use the Advanced Search function to search for documents for a specific date or time period.

National Coverage Determinations (NCDs) describe the circumstances for Medicare coverage nationwide for a specific medical service, procedure, or device. NCDs generally outline the conditions for which a service is considered to be covered, or not covered, under §1862(a)(1) or other applicable provisions of the Social Security Act (i.e., a determination as to whether the service is reasonable and necessary).

National Coverage Analyses (NCAs) Numerous documents support the national coverage determination process. They include tracking sheets to inform the public of the issues under consideration and the status of the review, information about MEDCAC meetings, Technology Assessments, and Decision Memoranda that announce CMS intention to issue an NCD. These documents, along with the compilation of medical and scientific information currently available, any Food and Drug Administration (FDA) safety and efficacy data, clinical trial information, etc., provide the rationale behind the evidence-based NCDs.

Coding Analyses for Labs (CALs)

CALs is an abbreviated process, similar to the NCD process, for making changes to the coding component of the negotiated laboratory NCDs. The process is used for adjusting the list of covered (or non-covered) ICD-9-CM diagnosis codes and coding guidance in the NCDs when there is a question regarding whether the code flows from the narrative indications in the NCD.

MEDCAC Meetings

The MEDCAC is used to supplement CMS' internal expertise and to ensure an unbiased and contemporary consideration of state of the art technology and science. MEDCAC members have background, education, and expertise in a wide variety of scientific, clinical and other related fields.

Technology Assessments (TAs)

Under an Interagency Agreement with CMS, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) contracts with their Evidence-based Practice Centers (EPCs) to develop systematic reviews, health technology assessments, and other reports at the request of CMS. The MCD includes final and occasional draft TAs.

Medicare Coverage Documents

This section includes documents such as the Compendia Index and the Guidance Index.

Using the Advanced Search Feature

The Advanced Search feature provides a variety of selection criteria beyond the Quick Search option for searching the database by document type. When a search for national coverage documents, local coverage documents, or both is selected, additional document type criteria options will appear. Figure 4 shows the Advanced Search feature when searching for a national coverage document.

Search by Document Type

An asterisk (*) indicates a required field

Note: Additional selection criteria will appear

1 *What document types do you want to search for?
Please choose at least one document type
[View coverage descriptions](#)

National and Local Coverage Documents
 National Coverage Documents
 Local Coverage Documents

All National Coverage
 National Coverage Analyses (NCAs)
 Coding Analyses for Labs (CALs)
 National Coverage Determinations (NCDs)
 Medicare Evidence Development & Coverage Advisory Committee (MEDCAC) Meetings
 Technology Assessments (TAs)
 Medicare Coverage Documents (MCDs)

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2 Additional Filters (Optional)

Note: When specifying multiple criteria, only records meeting ALL criteria are returned. If there is more than one applicable version, then only the latest will be returned

Keyword(s)
 NCA/CAL Status
 Benefit Category
 Date Criteria

[Back to Top](#)

Figure 4: Advanced Search Feature

- 1 Select the document types to include in the search. Click the 'View coverage descriptions' link for coverage document type descriptions.
- 2 Optional additional filters may also be selected to include in the search.

Helpful Hint: To select multiple options from a criteria list, hold down the Ctrl key and select options with the mouse or hold down the Shift key and select criteria with the down arrow on the keyboard. When multiple criteria are entered, only records meeting all criteria are returned.

National Coverage Documents

National coverage documents can be searched by the following document types:

- NCAs,
- CALs,
- NCDs
- MEDCAC Meetings,
- TAs, and
- Medicare Coverage Documents.

Additional national coverage document filters include:

- Keyword,
- NCA/CAL Status,
- Benefit Category (a dropdown menu offers choices such as cardiac rehabilitation programs or antigens), and
- Date Criteria.

Helpful Hint: The Advanced Search keyword option allows you to search the title or entire document for a keyword. Specify exact phrase, all words, or any words for your keyword search.

Local Coverage Documents

Local coverage documents can be searched by type of article and/or policy status.

An Advanced Search for local coverage documents requires that a geographic and/or specific contractor type or name be selected. When selecting a state that has been split into multiple regions (such as California), click the 'View county listing for split states' link to see the counties that make up each region.

Note that the 'Related Documents' section of a local coverage document features a link to the related article.

Figure 5 shows the following additional filters that may be selected when searching for a local coverage document:

- Keyword,
- CPT/HCPCS code,
- ICD-9-CM code, and
- Date Criteria.

Helpful Hint: If the ICD-9 code is unknown, click on the 'Code Lookup' link to search for a specific code by ICD-9 description keyword.

Additional Filters Back to Top

*Select at least one of the following filters:
Note: When specifying multiple criteria, only records meeting ALL criteria are returned. If there is more than one applicable version, then only the latest will be returned

Keyword(s)
 CPT/HCPCS
 ICD-9
 Enter an ICD-9 Diagnosis Code: Code Lookup
 Enter an ICD-9 Diagnosis Code Range: -
 Date Criteria

Figure 5: Local Coverage Document Additional Filters

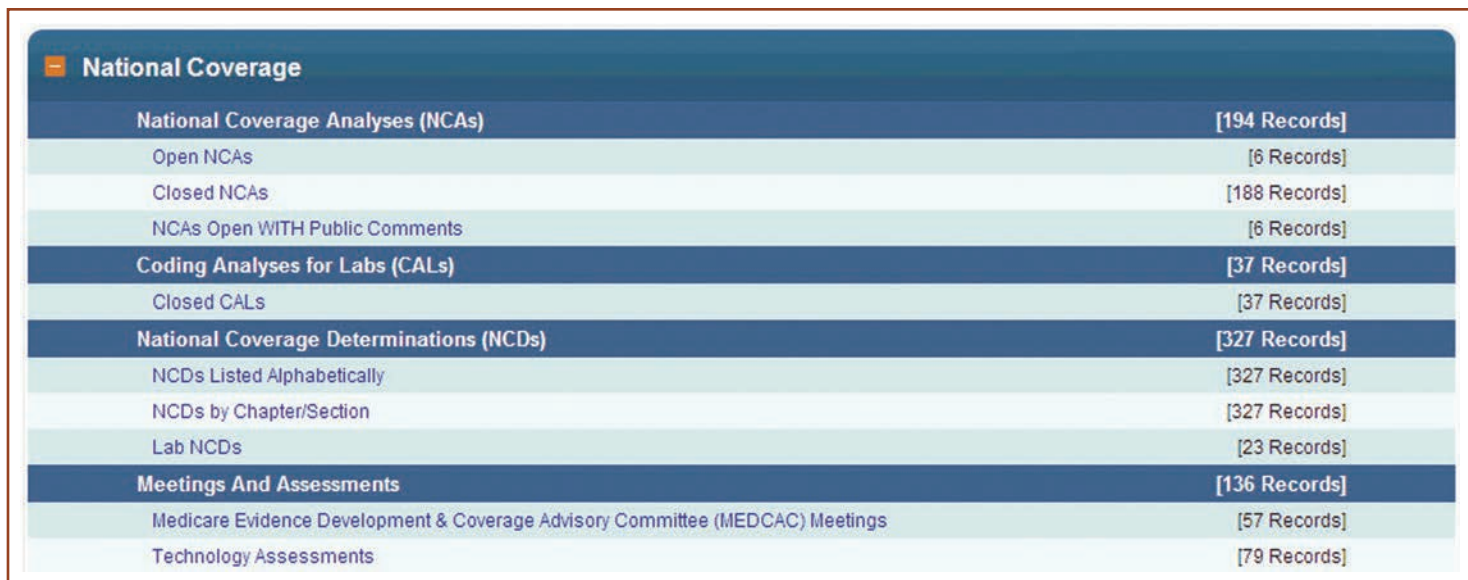
INDEXES

The Indexes feature provides a quick method of finding information such as:

- Which NCAs are open or closed for comment,
- LCDs and articles by contractor or state, and
- Local coverage contacts.

Using the Indexes Feature

Select the 'Indexes' button in the top navigation bar to begin using the Index. Then, expand the index lists to view national or local coverage. Figure 6 shows a portion of the expanded options that appear when the national coverage index is selected.



National Coverage	
National Coverage Analyses (NCAs)	[194 Records]
Open NCAs	[6 Records]
Closed NCAs	[188 Records]
NCAs Open WITH Public Comments	[6 Records]
Coding Analyses for Labs (CALs)	[37 Records]
Closed CALs	[37 Records]
National Coverage Determinations (NCDs)	[327 Records]
NCDs Listed Alphabetically	[327 Records]
NCDs by Chapter/Section	[327 Records]
Lab NCDs	[23 Records]
Meetings And Assessments	[136 Records]
Medicare Evidence Development & Coverage Advisory Committee (MEDCAC) Meetings	[57 Records]
Technology Assessments	[79 Records]

Figure 6: Indexes Feature

National Coverage Indexes

NCAs

The index includes open and closed analyses and the public comments relating to these. Select the 'Open FOR Public Comment' link to view NCAs that are currently open for comment. Select the 'Comment' button beside the applicable NCA title to submit a comment.

CALs

The index lists all closed lab analyses alphabetically.

NCDs

CMS provides an alphabetical index as well as an index organized by Chapter/Section of the "Medicare National Coverage Determinations Manual" (Internet-Only Publication 100-03, Parts 1 through 4). All lab determinations from Chapter 1, Part 3, of this manual are also listed alphabetically under labs.

Meetings and Assessments

MEDCAC topics are displayed by meeting date. TAs are displayed alphabetically in the TA index.

Medicare Coverage Documents

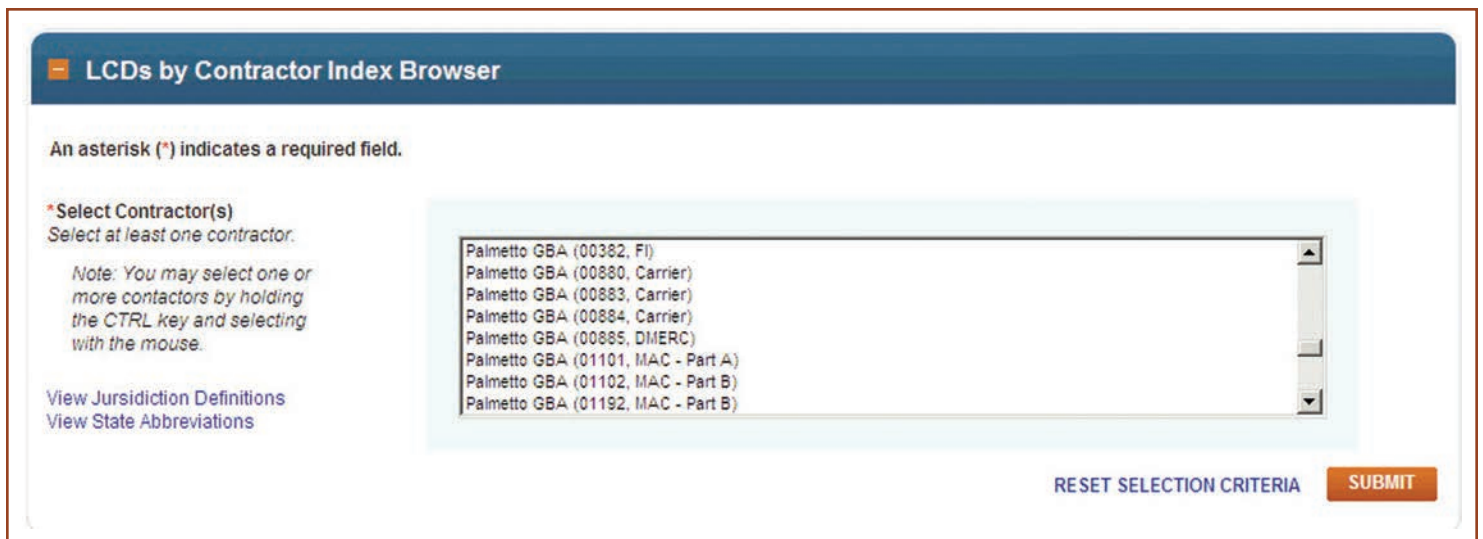
This section includes documents such as:

- The Compendia Index with the various compendia used by CMS; and
- The Guidance Index with links to the following four documents:
 - Factors CMS Considers in Commissioning External Technology Assessment,
 - Factors CMS Considers in Opening a National Coverage Determination,
 - Factors CMS Considers in Referring Topics to the MEDCAC, and
 - National Coverage Determination with Data Collection as a Condition of Coverage: Coverage with Evidence Development.

Local Coverage Indexes

LCDs

Obtain a list of all LCDs by contractor, state, or alphabetically. Figure 7 shows the screen when searching for LCDs by contractor. Make a selection from the list of contractors and then click 'Submit.' Links to jurisdiction definitions and state abbreviations are also available.



The screenshot shows a web interface titled "LCDs by Contractor Index Browser". It includes a header bar with a minus sign icon and the title. Below the header, there is a note: "An asterisk (*) indicates a required field." The main section is titled "*Select Contractor(s)" and includes the instruction "Select at least one contractor." A note below this says: "Note: You may select one or more contractors by holding the CTRL key and selecting with the mouse." There are two links: "View Jurisdiction Definitions" and "View State Abbreviations". A large text box contains a list of contractors: "Palmetto GBA (00382, FI)", "Palmetto GBA (00880, Carrier)", "Palmetto GBA (00883, Carrier)", "Palmetto GBA (00884, Carrier)", "Palmetto GBA (00885, DIMERC)", "Palmetto GBA (01101, MAC - Part A)", "Palmetto GBA (01102, MAC - Part B)", and "Palmetto GBA (01192, MAC - Part B)". At the bottom right, there are two buttons: "RESET SELECTION CRITERIA" and "SUBMIT".

Figure 7: LCDs by Contractor Index

Helpful Hint: When selecting LCDs or Articles by contractor, multiple contractors may be selected from the list by holding the CTRL key and selecting the contractors of choice with the mouse.

Articles

An index of articles may also be obtained by contractor, state, or alphabetically.

Contacts

This index features local coverage contacts by type of Medicare FFS Contractor. Click on a link to view an alphabetical listing of contractor contact information, as well as to identify the Medical Director for each contractor. This section also features a list of contractor websites.

REPORTS

The reports available through the MCD can be refined and customized by date and other criteria. The reports are excellent tools for finding only coverage determinations that are applicable to your needs.

Using the Reports Feature

Figure 8 displays a portion of the initial Reports screen.



Figure 8: Reports Feature

Highlights of several reports are provided below:

National Coverage Reports

What's New Report

This report lists NCDs, NCAs, CALs, MEDCAC meetings, TAs, and Medicare Coverage Documents posted in the last week, 30, 60, or 90 days according to your specification. When the report is initially selected, a listing of all document types posted in the last week will appear based on the default setting. For documents posted in the last 30, 60, or 90 days, change the criteria from the drop down menu and re-run the report.

Annual Report

This report is a list of NCAs, CALs, and/or NCDs by year.

Local Coverage Reports

What's New Report

Use this report to view the list of local coverage documents that: 1) have changed for a particular database update, or 2) are new for a particular database update.

Helpful Hint: Clicking on the MCD Page Help link from any of the Reports web pages provides instructions on how to custom-design reports.

LCD Status Report

Figure 9 shows the screen when selecting the LCD status report option. Use this report to determine the level and type of activity and the number of final documents for each contractor for a designated time period. Select the year to view either by month or quarterly. You may also search by region, state, contractor type or contractor name.

LCDs Status Report Browser

An asterisk (*) indicates a required field.

*Select Year and Quarter/Month to View: 2012 Full Year

Select one of the following filters (optional):

Note: You may select more than one Region, State, Contractor Type or Contractor by Name by holding the CTRL key and selecting with your mouse.

Region(s)
View region descriptions
Select Region(s)
Region I
Region II
Region III

State(s)
View county listings for split states
Select State(s)
Alabama
Alaska
American Samoa

Contractor Type(s)
Select Type(s)
Carrier
DME MAC
FI

Contractor(s) by Name
Palmetto GBA (01101, MAC - Part A)
Palmetto GBA (01102, MAC - Part B)
Palmetto GBA (01192, MAC - Part B)
Palmetto GBA (01201, MAC - Part A)

RESET SELECTION CRITERIA SUBMIT

Figure 9: LCD Status Report

Draft LCD Status Report

The default is to view draft LCDs for all contractors. Narrow a search by selecting one or more contractor types, or one or more individual contractors.

LCD Last Updated Report

Use this report to see when an LCD was last updated and for what reason(s).

LCD Service Indication Report

Use this report to find LCDs that allow a particular service for a particular diagnosis.

Article Status Report

This report indicates the status of a Medicare Contractor's articles based on the year and other criteria.

Self-Administered Drug (SAD) Exclusion List Report

The report lists drugs determined by a contractor to be usually self-administered and, therefore, excluded from Medicare Part B coverage by law.

DOWNLOADS

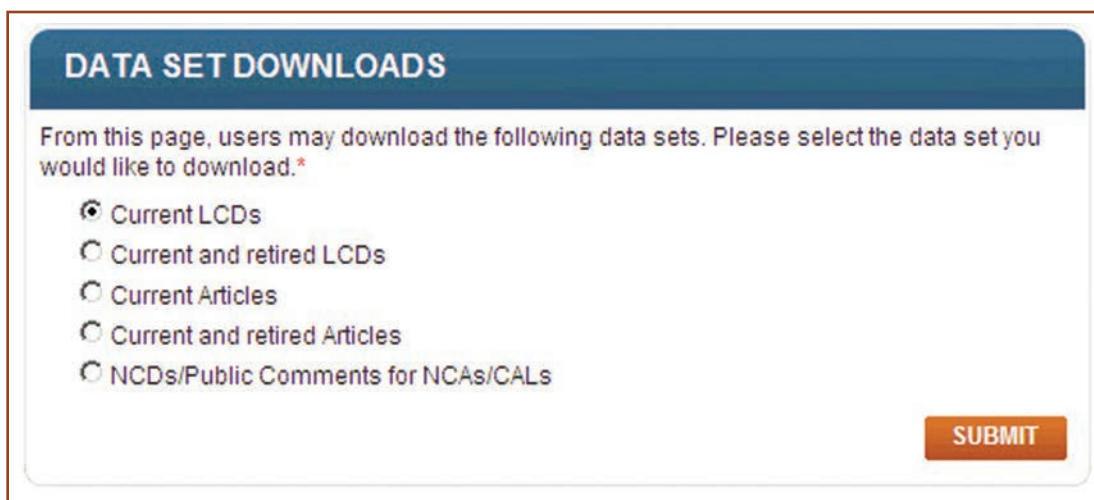
Using this feature you can download Access databases containing all the local coverage documents (Articles and LCDs) or the national coverage documents (NCDs and Public Comments for NCAs/CALs) used by the Medicare Coverage Database website.

The download files include data dictionaries that explain the content and usage of each database.

Note that downloading may take some time (as much as 6 hours, depending on the speed of the Internet connection).

Using the Downloads Feature

To access the Downloads feature, click 'Downloads' in the top navigation bar. Figure 10 displays a portion of the Downloads web page.



DATA SET DOWNLOADS

From this page, users may download the following data sets. Please select the data set you would like to download.*

- Current LCDs
- Current and retired LCDs
- Current Articles
- Current and retired Articles
- NCDs/Public Comments for NCAs/CALs

SUBMIT

Figure 10: Downloads Feature

The following data sets may be downloaded:

- Current LCDs,
- Current and Retired LCDs,
- Current Articles,
- Current and Retired Articles, and
- NCDs/Public Comments for NCAs/CALs.

Select the data you would like to download and click 'Submit.' Retired policies, sometimes known as archived policies, are those policies that are no longer in effect.

Depending on the volume of data you select, a customized report may come in a zipped or compressed format. Select the 'Can I get instructions on what you do with a zipped file?' link on this page for assistance with .zip files. Select the 'What are the hardware and software requirements?' link for system requirements. Note that most providers will not use the download feature.

Helpful Hint: Remember, the MCD is updated often; downloaded information may quickly become outdated.

RESOURCES

Beneficiary Notices

<http://www.cms.gov/BN>

Both Medicare beneficiaries and providers have certain rights and protections related to financial liability under the FFS Medicare and the Medicare Advantage (MA) Programs. These financial liability and appeal rights and protections are communicated to beneficiaries through notices given by providers.

CMS Coverage Electronic Mailing List

<http://www.cms.gov/AboutWebsite/EmailUpdates>

CMS offers a free e-mail subscription service, which provides notifications electronically when new information is available. CMS Coverage electronic mailing list subscribers receive weekly notification when national coverage documents are updated, including NCAs, NCDs, and MEDCAC meeting information.

Internet-Only Manual (IOM) Pub 100-03

“Medicare National Coverage Determinations Manual”

<http://www.cms.gov/manuals>

In addition to using the MCD, you may access NCDs in this manual. It is organized by categories (e.g., medical procedures, supplies, diagnostic services). A table of contents is provided for each of the four manual parts. Each subject in a category is listed and identified by a number.

Internet-Only Manual (IOM) Pub 100-08

“Medicare Program Integrity Manual”

<http://www.cms.gov/manuals>

Chapter 13 is entitled “Local Coverage Determinations” and describes the development process of LCDs by Medicare FFS Contractors, including involvement of practicing health care providers.

Local Coverage Contacts

<http://www.cms.gov/medicare-coverage-database>

From the MCD Indexes page, click List of Contractor Websites in the Local Coverage Contacts section. From a Medicare FFS Contractor website, sign up for applicable electronic mailing list.

Medicare Coverage Center

<http://www.cms.gov/center/coverage.asp>

The CMS Coverage Center web page offers a spotlight of new information and links to other information organized by such topics as coverage process, information exchange, and coverage guidance documents.

Medicare Coverage Database (MCD) Powerpoint

<http://www.cms.gov/medicare-coverage-database>

Located under the ‘Related Links’ section at the bottom of the MCD Overview web page, this presentation provides additional information about the MCD.

Medicare Coverage General Information

<http://www.cms.gov/CoverageGenInfo>

This page provides basic coverage information and links to the Coverage Center and MCD.



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This fact sheet was current at the time it was published or uploaded onto the web. Medicare policy changes frequently so links to the source documents have been provided within the document for your reference.

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