

## **Medicare Contracting Reform Industry Consultation with Beneficiary Organization Representatives**

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The meeting took place in Washington, D.C. on June 15, 2005 with representatives of two beneficiary organizations. Several topics related to contracting reform were discussed. The organization representatives stressed that it is important to keep in mind that some Medicare beneficiaries are in need of individualized assistance. They also suggested that problems often can occur when beneficiaries are not informed of their rights. Other topics covered include customer service, outreach and information, and the annual survey.

### **Customer Service**

- Continuity among contractors is important
- Training of Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) needs to be conducted routinely
- Timeliness is important
- Beneficiaries like to talk to a person; would like to see some of the recorded messages eliminated during business hours and more calls answered by CSRs
- Concerned about the knowledge level of CSRs, especially evident when a beneficiary goes beyond basic questions
- Contracted services with language lines are not very useful. Instead, contractors should have bi-lingual CSRs

### **Outreach and Information that CMS Should Provide Beneficiaries**

- What info should be released to beneficiaries?
  - Contact information
  - Specifics concerning the change in contractors
  - Changes planned in the Medicare Summary Notice
  - Sources of individualized assistance
  - Reasons for changes and the rationale or impact on the beneficiary
- How and when should information be released?
  - Before changes occur
  - Direct mail from CMS or Social Security
  - Medicare.gov
  - Medicare & You

### **Survey**

- Conduct focus groups across the country instead of in just one jurisdiction
- Conduct follow-up calls to a random number of beneficiaries who have called in with inquiries
- Beneficiaries will not respond to written surveys
- Provide a number to call and have a person answering
- Some sort of survey should be performed (at least) annually