



# Medicare Physicians and Non-Physician Practitioners

## *Protecting Your Privacy, Protecting Your Medicare Enrollment Record*

If you are a physician or non-physician practitioner who is enrolled in Medicare, or who is planning to enroll in Medicare, it is important that you protect your Medicare enrollment information from getting into the hands of dishonest and unscrupulous people—personal identity thieves. When the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) gives physicians and non-physician practitioners Internet access to their Medicare enrollment information, they will need to take proactive steps to protect their Medicare enrollment information.

### **IS YOUR MEDICARE ENROLLMENT INFORMATION CURRENT?**

If you enrolled in Medicare or updated your Medicare enrollment information within the past 5 years, your Medicare enrollment information is stored in the Provider Enrollment, Chain and Ownership System (PECOS). This is an electronic system in which Medicare contractors enter the Medicare enrollment information that you provided on the Medicare enrollment application.

If you enrolled more than 5 years ago and have not submitted any updates to your Medicare enrollment information, you will need to update your Medicare enrollment information. Doing so will ensure that your Medicare enrollment information is in PECOS.

### **YOU CAN USE INTERNET-BASED PECOS!**

CMS has made PECOS available to physicians and non-physician practitioners. This means that you can enroll in Medicare or update your Medicare enrollment information yourself, over the Internet. If you decide to use the Internet to enroll or update your Medicare enrollment information, you will benefit in several ways: PECOS ensures that you submit all required information; you can print your completed application/update before you submit it; you can print a list of required paper documentation that needs to be mailed to the Medicare enrollment contractor at the time you submit your application; you can check the status of your application/update by using the Internet; and your application/update is processed more quickly than a paper transaction.

### **YOU NEED TO PROTECT YOUR ENROLLMENT DATA! HERE ARE SOME THINGS YOU CAN DO.**

Your Medicare enrollment information contains personal information. You need to protect it. You need to take steps to ensure that your Medicare enrollment information does not get into the hands of people who can use that information to commit fraud.

We have made it easy for physicians and non-physician practitioners to access Internet-based PECOS by enabling them to use the same User IDs and passwords for Internet-based PECOS that they use for the National Plan and Provider Enumeration System (NPPES). You are responsible for your NPPES User Id and password because they provide access to your Medicare enrollment record in PECOS. It is essential that you take the appropriate steps to keep your NPPES User Id and password secure.

You should take the following actions to ensure the protection of your Medicare enrollment information:

- **Change your NPPES password before accessing Internet-based PECOS for the first time. At least once a year thereafter, go to NPPES and change your password.** Although your User ID cannot be changed, you should periodically change your NPPES password—at least once a year.
- **Use Internet-based PECOS to view your enrollment data several times a year, checking to make sure the information has not been altered without your knowledge.** Any changes in your Medicare enrollment information would be ones that you submitted on paper to your local Medicare contractor, or ones that you made yourself using Internet-based PECOS. Any other changes would be suspect and should be reported to your Medicare contractor immediately.
- **Maintain your Medicare enrollment record.** Physicians and non-physician practitioners are required to report changes in their Medicare enrollment information. For additional information about reporting changes, go to the download section of [www.cms.hhs.gov/MedicareProviderSupEnroll](http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MedicareProviderSupEnroll).
- **Store any printed copies of your Medicare enrollment information, or paper CMS-855 and CMS-588 forms, in a secure manner.** Do not let others have access to this information, as it contains your personal information, including your date of birth and your Social Security Number. Make sure copies are not left behind at the photocopy machine or on top of your desk or workspace.
- **Make sure your Medicare payments are electronic and go directly into your bank account.** Medicare requires newly enrolling providers and suppliers to complete form CMS-588, Electronic Funds Transfer Authorization Agreement, which will enable Medicare to send payments directly to a provider/supplier's bank account. If you are not receiving Medicare payments electronically, you need to complete this form and mail it to your Medicare contractor. The form can be downloaded from [www.cms.hhs.gov/cmsforms](http://www.cms.hhs.gov/cmsforms).

## INTERNET-BASED PECOS IS A SECURE SYSTEM.

Internet-based PECOS meets all required Government security standards—in terms of data entry, data transmission, and the electronic storage of your Medicare enrollment information. Only authorized individuals can enter Medicare enrollment information into Internet-based PECOS or view Internet-based PECOS data. These individuals are trained in security standards and are bound by agreements to protect your Medicare enrollment information. We do not disclose your Medicare enrollment information to anyone except when we are authorized or required to do so by law.