



PQRI Information Available

A new CMS web page dedicated to providing information on the Physician Quality Reporting Initiative (PQRI) is now available.

On December 20, 2006, the President signed the Tax Relief and Health Care Act of 2006 (TRHCA). Section 101 under Title I authorizes the establishment of a physician quality reporting system for eligible professionals by CMS. CMS has titled the statutory program the Physician Quality Reporting Initiative. For more information, visit <http://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Quality-Initiatives-Patient-Assessment-Instruments/PQRS/index.html> on the CMS website.

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Related CR Release Date: July 21, 2006

Effective Date: October 1, 2006

Related CR Transmittal #: R16COM

Implementation Date: October 2, 2006

Disclosure Desk Reference for Provider Contact Centers

Note: This article was updated on June 20, 2013, to reflect current Web addresses. This article was previously revised on May 7, 2007, to add this statement that Medicare FFS has announced a contingency plan regarding the May 23, 2007 implementation of the NPI. For some period after May 23, 2007, Medicare FFS will allow continued use of legacy numbers on transactions; accept transactions with only NPIs; and accept transactions with both legacy numbers and NPIs. For details of this contingency plan, see the *MLN Matters* article, MM5595, at <http://www.cms.gov/outreach-and-education/medicare-learning-network/mln/mlnmattersarticles/downloads/MM5595.pdf> All other information remains unchanged.

Provider Types Affected

All physicians, providers, and suppliers billing Medicare

Provider Action Needed

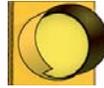


STOP – Impact to You

When you call or write a Medicare fee-for-service provider contact center (PCC) to request beneficiary protected health information, the PCC staff, in order to comply with the requirements of the Privacy Act of 1974 and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, will authenticate your identity prior to disclosure.

Disclaimer

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**CAUTION – What You Need to Know**

CR5089 revises *Medicare Contractor Beneficiary and Provider Communications Manual*, Chapter 3, Section 30, and Chapter 6, Section 80, to update the guidance to PCCs for authenticating providers who call or write to request beneficiary protected health information, and to clarify the information they may disclose after authentication.

**GO – What You Need to Do**

Be prepared to supply the required authentication information when contacting a PCC to request protected health information.

Background

In order to protect the privacy of Medicare beneficiaries and to comply with the requirements of the Privacy Act of 1974 and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, customer service staff at Medicare PCCs must first authenticate the identity of providers/staff that call or write to request beneficiary protected health information before disclosing it to the requestor.

CR5089, from which this article is taken, completely revises Section 30 in Chapter 3 and Section 80 in Chapter 6 of the *Medicare Contractor Beneficiary and Provider Communications Manual* (Publication 100-9). It updates the PCC Disclosure Desk Reference, the main purpose of which is to protect the privacy of Medicare beneficiaries by ensuring that protected health information is disclosed to providers only when appropriate, to include:

- Guidance for authenticating providers who call or write to request beneficiary protected health information; and
- Clarification of the information that may be disclosed after authentication of writers and callers.

Please note that while new subsections have been added to each chapter/section, this reflects reformatting and revision of existing information rather than new requirements.

Below is the authentication guidance that the PCCs will be using:

Telephone Inquiries

Provider Authentication

CSR Telephone Inquiries - Through May 22, 2007, Customer Service Representatives (CSR) will authenticate providers using provider number and provider name.

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Interactive Voice Response (IVR) Telephone Inquiries - Through May 22, 2007, IVRs will authenticate providers using only the provider number.

Note: See "Final Note" below to learn more about provider authentication after May 22, 2007.

Written Inquiries

Provider Authentication

Through May 22, 2007, for written inquiries, PCCs will authenticate providers using provider number and provider name.

Note: See "Final Note" below to learn more about provider authentication after May 22, 2007.

At this point, there are some specific details about provider authentication in written inquiries of which you should be aware.

There is one exception for the requirement to authenticate a written inquiry. An inquiry received on the provider's official letterhead (including e-mails with an attachment on letterhead) will meet provider authentication requirements (no provider identification number required) if the provider's name and address are included in the letterhead and clearly establish the provider's identity.

Further, if multiple addresses are on the letterhead, authentication is considered met as long as one of the addresses matches the address that Medicare has on record for that provider. Thus, make sure that your written inquiries contain all provider practice locations or use the letterhead that has the address that Medicare has on record for you.

Also, please note that requests submitted via fax on provider letterhead will be considered to be written inquiries and are subject to the same authentication requirements as those received in regular mail. However, for such fax (and also for e-mail) submissions, even if all authentication elements are present, the PCC will not fax or e-mail their responses back to you.

Rather, they will send you the requested information by regular mail, or respond to these requests by telephone. In either of these response methods, or if they elect to send you an automated e-mail reply (containing no beneficiary-specific information), they will remind you that such information cannot be disclosed electronically via email or fax and that, in the future, you should send a written inquiry through regular mail or use the IVR for beneficiary-specific information.

And lastly, inquiries received without letterhead, including hardcopy, fax, e-mail, pre-formatted inquiry forms, or inquiries written on Remittance Advice (RAs) or Medicare Summary Notices (MSNs), will be authenticated the same as written inquiries, (explained above) using provider name and the provider number.

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Insufficient or Inaccurate Requests

You should also understand that for any protected health information request in which the PCC determines that the authentication elements are insufficient or inaccurate, you will have to provide complete and accurate input before the information will be released to you.

Such requests that are submitted in written form and those on pre-formatted inquiry forms, will be returned in their entirety by regular mail, with a note stating that the requested information will be supplied upon submission of all authentication elements, and identifying which elements are missing or do not match the Medicare record.

Alternatively, if you sent the request by e-mail (containing no protected health information), the PCC may return it by e-mail, or may elect to respond by telephone to obtain the rest of the authentication elements.

Beneficiary Authentication

Regardless of the type of telephone inquiry (CSR or IVR) or written inquiry, PCCs will authenticate four beneficiary data elements before disclosing any beneficiary information:

- 1) Last name;
- 2) First name or initial;
- 3) Health Insurance Claim Number; and
- 4) Either date of birth (eligibility, next eligible date, Certificate of Medical Necessity (CMN)/Durable Medical Equipment Medicare Administrative Contractor Information Form (DIF) [pre-claim]) or date of service (claim status, CMN/DIF [post-claim]).

Please refer to the disclosure charts attached to CR5089 for specific guidance related to these data elements as well as details on the beneficiary information that will be made available in response to authenticated inquiries. CR5089 is available at <http://www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Guidance/Transmittals/downloads/R16COM.pdf> on the CMS website.

Special Instances

Below are three special instances that you should know about.

Overlapping Claims

Overlapping claims (multiple claims with the same or similar dates of service or billing period) occur when a date of service or billing period conflicts with another, indicating that one or the other may be incorrect.

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Sometimes this happens when the provider is seeking to avoid have a claim be rejected, for example:

- When some End State Renal Disease (ESRD) facilities prefer to obtain the inpatient hospital benefit days for the month, prior to the ESRD monthly bill being generated, thus allowing the facility to code the claim appropriately and bill around the inpatient hospital stay/stays; or
- Skilled nursing facility and inpatient hospital stays.

These situations fall into the category of disclosing information needed to bill Medicare properly, and information can be released as long as all authentication elements are met.

Pending Claims

A pending claim is one that is being processed, or has been processed and is pending payment. CSRs can provide information about pending claims, including Internal Control Number (ICN), pay date/amount or denial, as long as all authentication requirements are met.

Providers should note, however, that until payment is actually made or a remittance advice is issued, the information provided could change.

Deceased Beneficiaries

Although the Privacy Act of 1974 does not apply to deceased individuals, the HIPAA Privacy Rule concerning protected health information applies to individuals, both living and deceased. Therefore, PCCs will comply with authentication requirements when responding to requests for information related to deceased beneficiaries.

Final note: More information will be provided in a future MLN Matters article about authentication on and after May 23, 2007, the implementation date for the National Provider Identifier or NPI.

Additional Information

You can find more information about Provider Contact Center guidelines concerning authentication by going to <http://www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Guidance/Transmittals/downloads/R16COM.pdf> on the CMS website.

Attached to that CR, you will find the updated *Medicare Contractor Beneficiary and Provider Communications Manual* (Publication 100.09), Chapter 3 (Provider Inquiries), Section 30 (Disclosure of Information); and Chapter 6 (Provider Customer Service Program), Section 80 (Disclosure of Information).

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If you have any questions, please contact your carrier, durable medical equipment (DME) regional carrier, DME Medicare Administrative Contractor (DME MAC), fiscal intermediary, or regional home health intermediary at their toll-free number, which may be found at <http://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Monitoring-Programs/provider-compliance-interactive-map/index.html> on the CMS website.

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