
CMS Manual System

Pub. 100-09 Medicare Contractor Beneficiary and Provider Communications

Department of Health &
Human Services (DHHS)
Centers for Medicare &
Medicaid Services (CMS)

Transmittal 13

Date: August 5, 2005

CHANGE REQUEST 3951

SUBJECT: Provider Contact Centers Training Program

I. SUMMARY OF CHANGES: Instructions to allow all Medicare Provider Contact Centers to close for up to 8 hours per month for provider Customer Service Representative (CSR) training and/or staff development.

NEW/REVISED MATERIAL:

EFFECTIVE: September 01, 2005

IMPLEMENTATION DATES: September 01, 2005

Disclaimer for manual changes only: The revision date and transmittal number apply to the red italicized material only. Any other material was previously published and remains unchanged. However, if this revision contains a table of contents, you will receive the new/revised information only, and not the entire table of contents.

II. CHANGES IN MANUAL INSTRUCTIONS: (N/A if manual not updated.)

(R = REVISED, N = NEW, D = DELETED) – (Only One Per Row.)

R/N/D	CHAPTER/SECTION/SUBSECTION/TITLE
R	3/ 20.1/Guidelines for Telephone Service
R	3/ 20.1.6 /Staff Development and Training

III. FUNDING: No additional funding will be provided by CMS; contractor activities are to be carried out within their FY 2005 operating budgets.

IV. ATTACHMENTS:

	Business Requirements
	Manual Instruction
	Confidential Requirements
	One-Time Notification
	Recurring Update Notification

*Unless otherwise specified, the effective date is the date of service.

Attachment - Business Requirements

Pub. 100-09	Transmittal: 13	Date: August 5, 2005	Change Request 3951
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SUBJECT: Implementation of the Provider Contact Centers Training Program

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

A. Background: CMS recognizes the need for provider Customer Service Representative (CSR) training. The goal is to help CSRs improve the consistency and accuracy of their answers to provider questions, to increase their understanding of issues, and to facilitate CSRs' retention of the facts of their training by increasing its frequency. CMS understands that training CSRs as a group will help realize training resource efficiencies and savings that will result in having well trained CSRs.

B. Policy: CMS allows Medicare Provider Contact Centers to close up to 8 hours per month in order to train CSRs.

II. BUSINESS REQUIREMENTS

"Shall" denotes a mandatory requirement

"Should" denotes an optional requirement

Requirement Number	Requirements	Responsibility ("X" indicates the columns that apply)								
		F I	R H I	C a r r i e r	D M E R C	Shared System Maintainers				Other
						F I S S	M C S	V M S	C W F	
3951.1	All Medicare Provider Contact Centers may close for up to 8 hours per month for CSR training and/or staff development.	X	X	X	X					
3951.1.1	Contractors shall perform training within their existing budget.	X	X	X	X					
3951.1.2	The training time shall not be used for corporate meetings. Contractors shall request permission to close in those circumstances according to Section 20.1.A of IOM Pub. 100-9, Chapter 3.	X	X	X	X					

Requirement Number	Requirements	Responsibility (“X” indicates the columns that apply)								
		F I	R H I	C a r r i e r	D M E R C	Shared System Maintainers				Other
						F I S S	M C S	V M S	C W F	
3951.1.3	Training time not used within a specific month shall not be carried over to the next month.	X	X	X	X					
3951.1.4	Time used for training on Federal holidays is in addition to the 8 hours per month allowed by CMS for CSR training closure. This 8 hour allowance is separate from any training time occurring during Federal holidays in accordance with Section 20.1.A of IOM Pub. 100-9, Chapter 3.	X	X	X	X					
3951.2	Blended call centers shall maintain beneficiary telephone service in accordance with IOM Pub 100-9, Chapter 2, when closing the provider telephone lines to train provider CSRs.	X	X	X	X					
3951.3	Contractors shall perform an analysis to evaluate the appropriate time for closure to anticipate the impact on their ability to meet all CMS requirements as instructed in Sections 20.1.3 and 20.2.1.4 of IOM Pub. 100-9, Chapter 3. CMS will not view performance waivers favorably if the training time closures are the justification for poor performance.	X	X	X	X					
3951.3.1	Contractors should consult their PCOM Advisory Group about the best hours for training closures and training topics.	X	X	X	X					
3951.4	Contractors shall submit to CMS a training schedule, including dates, times, topics, sub-topics and contact information by the 15th of the month prior to when the training will be performed via the Provider Services mailbox, ProviderServices@cms.hhs.gov using the subject line “Training Schedule”.	X	X	X	X					
3951.4.1	Upon receipt of the training schedule, CMS will send an acknowledgement e-mail. Contractors shall assume approval of closures of 4 hours or less unless they receive notification to the	X	X	X	X					

Requirement Number	Requirements	Responsibility (“X” indicates the columns that apply)								
		F I	R H I	C a r r i e r	D M E R C	Shared System Maintainers				Other
						F I S S	M C S	V M S	C W F	
	contrary.									
3951.4.2	CMS will post training schedules and contact information submitted by all provider Medicare contractors at http://www.cms.hhs.gov/contractors/customerse rv/default.asp .	X	X	X	X					
3951.5	Contractors shall request CMS approval of training of more than four hours on the same day at least a month in advance of the training date via the Provider Services mailbox, ProviderServices@cms.hhs.gov using the subject line “One Time Approval Request”.	X	X	X	X					
3951.5.1	CMS will provide one time authorization for training closure requests of more than four hours. CMS will evaluate this type of authorization on a case by case basis and authorize it under special circumstances within one week of receipt. If the contractor does not receive a confirmation from CMS within one week of submitting its request for training closure, the contractor can close for training under the assumption that its request was approved.	X	X	X	X					
3951.5.2	In instances where changes to previously approved training schedules are necessary, contractors shall submit all requests for changes via the Provider Services mailbox, ProviderServices@cms.hhs.gov using the subject line “Change of One Time Approval”.	X	X	X	X					
3951.5.3	A new CMS approval is required to proceed with changes to previously approved training schedules. Changes shall be submitted to CMS within a reasonable time, enough to allow provider notification.	X	X	X	X					

Requirement Number	Requirements	Responsibility (“X” indicates the columns that apply)								
		F I	R H I	C a r r i e r	D M E R C	Shared System Maintainers				Other
						F I S S	M C S	V M S	C W F	
3951.6	Contractors shall notify providers about their closure time for training. At a minimum, contractors shall post a closure notification for providers on their IVRs and websites.	X	X	X	X					
3951.6.1	Contractors with separate lines for IVR and CSRs shall post a closure notification for providers on both lines. See additional instructions regarding IVR posting in Section 20.1.B of IOM Pub. 100-9, Chapter 3.	X	X	X	X					
3951.6.2	Contractors shall use their listserv, in addition to the IVR and website, to notify providers of CMS authorized one time only-training closure or a training closure out of the contractor’s regular training schedule. Contractors shall use their listserv to notify their provider community of their closure times the first time that they implement the Training Program in their site.	X	X	X	X					
3951.6.3	Contractors shall notify providers of all training closures or changes in their training closure schedule at least two weeks in advance of the training date.	X	X	X	X					
3951.6.4	Contractors shall notify providers at least three weeks in advance a closure of more than four hours approved by CMS.	X	X	X	X					
3951.6.5	Contractors shall monitor provider complaints about training time closures and take action to resolve them and decrease the volume of complaints.	X	X	X	X					
3951.6.5.1	Reports about provider complaints and their resolution shall be kept on site and available to CMS upon request.	X	X	X	X					
3951.7	Contractors should use CSRs’ feedback from training, CSRs’ pre- and post-training and retention results to determine improvement opportunities to their training program and for development of refresher training.	X	X	X	X					

Requirement Number	Requirements	Responsibility (“X” indicates the columns that apply)								
		F I	R H I	C a r r i e r	D M E R C	Shared System Maintainers				Other
F I S S	M C S					V M S	C W F			
3951.7.1	Contractors should implement a process to evaluate the CSRs’ progress pre- and post-training on a monthly basis.	X	X	X	X					
3951.7.2	Contractors should implement a process to evaluate the CSRs’ retention of training information on a quarterly basis.	X	X	X	X					
3951.8	Contractors’ telephone systems shall allow calls from CMS or CMS’s representatives to CSRs. These CMS callers will not have a provider number.	X	X	X	X					
3951.9	Beginning Fiscal Year 2006, contractors shall report in CSAMS (1) the number of hours per month that the contractor closed for training, during normal business hours and (2) the number of hours used for training on Federal holidays.	X	X	X	X					
3951.9.1	Copies of CMS written approval, training schedule, training plan, training materials, as well as CSR attendance sheets, shall be made available upon request.	X	X	X	X					

III. PROVIDER EDUCATION

Requirement Number	Requirements	Responsibility (“X” indicates the columns that apply)								
		F I	R H I	C a r r i e r	D M E R C	Shared System Maintainers				Other
F I S S	M C S					V M S	C W F			
3951.10	Follow Business Requirements 3951.6 through 3951.6.4 to educate providers about closures.	X	X	X	X					

IV. SUPPORTING INFORMATION AND POSSIBLE DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

A. Other Instructions:

X-Ref Requirement #	Instructions
	N/A

B. Design Considerations:

X-Ref Requirement #	Recommendation for Medicare System Requirements
	N/A

C. Interfaces:

X-Ref Requirement #	Recommendation for Medicare System Requirements
	N/A

D. Contractor Financial Reporting /Workload Impact: N/A

E. Dependencies: N/A

F. Testing Considerations: N/A

V. SCHEDULE, CONTACTS, AND FUNDING

Effective Date*: September 01, 2005 Implementation Date: September 01, 2005 Pre-Implementation Contact(s): Lisandra Torres Guzman (410)786-3415 Post-Implementation Contact(s): Lisandra Torres Guzman (410)786-3415	No additional funding will be provided by CMS; contractor activities are to be carried out within their FY 2005 operating budgets.
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20.1 - Guidelines for Telephone Service

(Rev. 13, Issued: 08-05-05, Effective: 09-01-05, Implementation: 09-06-05)

The guidelines established below apply to contractors' general provider inquiry telephone numbers. The standards shall not apply to those inquiries handled by other units within the contractor (e.g., appeals, fraud, MSP). To ensure all inquiries are handled as expeditiously as possible, inbound provider inquiry numbers (and the lines) shall be separate from beneficiary inquiry numbers. Providers shall not use numbers established for beneficiary inquiries.

A - Availability of Telephone Service

1. Contractors shall make CSR telephone service available to callers continuously during normal business hours, including lunch and breaks.
2. Normal business hours for live telephone service are defined as 8:00 a.m. through 4:30 p.m. for all time zones of the geographical area serviced, Monday through Friday. Where contractors provide national coverage or where contractors serve areas outside of the continental United States, CMS will entertain a waiver request for hours of operation. *Planned closures during normal business hours must be approved by CMS CO. Contractors shall notify CMS via the service reports mailbox (servicereports@cms.hhs.gov) by October 31st of the fiscal year about any planned call center closures. This list shall also be sent to the appropriate RO. Changes made to this schedule shall be sent to CMS CO and RO for approval. Call centers shall notify the provider community of the approved closure at least two weeks in advance of closure.*
3. On Federal holidays, in lieu of answering telephone inquiries, contractors may choose to perform other appropriate call center work, e.g., provide CSR training. Contractors shall notify CMS via the service reports mailbox (servicereports@cms.hhs.gov) by October 31st of the fiscal year about any planned call center closures. This list shall also be sent to the appropriate RO. *Changes made to this schedule shall be sent to CMS CO using the service reports mailbox and the RO for approval. Call centers shall notify the provider community of the planned closure at least two weeks in advance of closure.*
4. Call center staffing shall be based on the pattern of incoming calls per hour and day of the week, ensuring that adequate coverage of incoming calls throughout each workday is maintained.
5. In accordance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, all call centers shall provide the ability for deaf, hard of hearing or speech-impaired providers to communicate via TeleTYpewriter (TTY) equipment. A TTY is a special device permitting, hard of hearing, or speech-impaired individuals to use the telephone, by allowing them to type messages back and forth to one another instead of talking and listening. (A TTY is required at both ends of the conversation in order to communicate.) Call centers currently having the ability to provide this service for beneficiary callers may use the same equipment, however, they may not use the same inbound lines. Contractors shall follow the

process outlined in IOM, Pub. 100-9, Chapter 3, §20.1.1.B to request additional lines to handle this requirement. Contractors shall publicize the TTY line on their websites.

20.1.6 – Staff Development and Training

(Rev. 13, Issued: 08-05-05, Effective: 09-01-05, Implementation: 09-06-05)

A. General Requirements

1. Contractors shall provide training for all new CSR hires and refresher training updates for existing personnel. This training shall enable the CSRs to answer the full range of customer service inquiries. The training, at a minimum, shall include technical instructions on Medicare eligibility, coverage benefits, claims processing, Medicare systems and administration, customer service skills and telephone techniques, CSAMS performance requirements, the function of the IVR unit and the use of a computer terminal. Contractors shall have a training evaluation process in place to certify that the trainee is ready to independently handle inquiries.
2. Upon receipt of CMS developed standardized CSR training materials, including job aids, contractors shall implement these materials for all CSRs on duty and those hired in the future. Since the development of these materials will be done by CMS, it is not expected that there will be any costs to the contractors to use these training materials. Standardized training materials and other training information will be posted to the following Web site: <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/contractors/customerserv/train.asp>. Contractors shall check this Web site monthly for updated training materials. Contractors may supplement the standard materials with their own materials as long as there is no contradiction of policy or procedures.
3. All contractors shall train their CSRs about how to find, navigate and fully use their Medicare provider education Web site and www.cms.hhs.gov. CSRs shall be connected to and able to use the contractor's Web site and the CMS Web site for providers.
4. Contractors shall send training representatives to 2-4 national train-the-trainer conferences provided by CMS. Contractors shall be prepared to send at least one customer service/provider education representative to these training sessions. Contractors shall expect training sessions to run from 2-4 days. This representative shall be responsible for training additional contractor customer service staff. These staff members shall also be prepared to develop training programs for Medicare providers and suppliers on the various initiatives.

B. Provider Contact Centers Training Program

CMS recognizes the need for provider Customer Service Representative training. The goal is to help CSRs improve the consistency and accuracy of their answers to provider questions, to increase their understanding of issues, and to facilitate CSRs' retention of the facts of their training by increasing its frequency. To accomplish this goal, all Medicare Provider Contact Centers may close for up to 8 hours per month for CSR training and/or staff development with the following limitations:

- *The 8 hours approved by CMS for contact center closure shall be used for training time only.*
- *The training time shall not be used for corporate meetings. Contractors shall request permission to close in those circumstances according to Section 20.1.A of this chapter.*
- *Training time not used within a specific month shall not be carried over to the next month.*

*Time used for training on **Federal holidays** is in addition to the 8 hours per month allowed by CMS for CSR training closure. This 8 hour allowance is separate from any training time occurring during Federal holidays in accordance with Section 20.1.A of this chapter.*

1. Closure Determination

Contractors shall perform an analysis to evaluate the appropriate time for closure to anticipate the impact on their ability to meet all CMS performance requirements as instructed in Sections 20.1.3 and 20.2.1.4 of this chapter. Contractors should consult their PCOM Advisory Group about the best hours for training closures and training topics. Blended call centers shall maintain beneficiary telephone service in accordance with IOM Pub 100-9, Chapter 2, when closing the provider telephone lines to train provider CSRs. CMS will not view performance waivers favorably if the training time closures are the justification for poor performance.

2. Provider Complaints

Contractors shall monitor provider complaints about training time closures and take action to resolve them and decrease the volume of complaints. Reports about provider complaints and their resolution shall be kept on site and available to CMS upon request.

3. Training Schedule

Contractors shall submit to CMS a training schedule, including dates, times, topics, sub-topics and contact information by the 15th of the month prior to when the training will be performed via the Provider Services mailbox, ProviderServices@cms.hhs.gov using the subject line "Training Schedule". CMS will post training schedules and contact information submitted by all provider Medicare contractors at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/contractors/customerserv/train.asp>. Upon receipt of the training schedule, CMS will send an acknowledgement e-mail. Contractors shall assume approval of closures of 4 hours or less unless they receive notification to the contrary.

4. Training Closures of More than Four Hours

For training of more than four hours on the same day, contractors shall request CMS approval at least a month in advance of the training date via the Provider Services mailbox, ProviderServices@cms.hhs.gov using the subject line “One Time Approval Request”. CMS will provide one time authorization for training closure requests of more than four hours. CMS will evaluate this type of authorization on a case by case basis and authorize it under special circumstances within one week of receipt. If the contractor does not receive a confirmation from CMS within one week of submitting its request for training closure, the contractor can close for training under the assumption that its request was approved.

In instances where changes to previously approved training schedules are necessary, contractors shall submit all requests for changes via the Provider Services mailbox, ProviderServices@cms.hhs.gov using the subject line “Change of One Time Approval”. A new CMS approval is required to proceed with changes to previously approved training schedules. Changes shall be submitted to CMS within a reasonable time, enough to allow provider notification.

5. Provider Notifications

Contractors shall notify providers about their closure time for training. At a minimum, contractors shall post a closure notification for providers on their IVRs and websites. Contractors with separate lines for IVR and CSRs shall post a closure notification for providers on both lines. See additional instructions regarding IVR posting in Section 20.1.B of this chapter. In addition to the IVR and website, contractors shall use their listserv to notify providers of CMS authorized one time only-training closure or a training closure out of the contractor’s regular training schedule. Contractors shall use their listserv to notify their provider community of their closure times the first time that they implement the Training Program in their site.

Contractors shall notify providers of all training closures or changes in their training closure schedule at least two weeks in advance of the training date. For training of more than four hours approved by CMS, contractors shall notify providers at least three weeks in advance of training closure.

6. CSR Feedback

To assure that CSRs are receiving the maximum benefit of the training program, contractors should use CSRs’ feedback from training, CSRs’ pre-and post-training and retention results to determine improvement opportunities to their training program and for development of refresher training. Contractors should implement a process to evaluate the CSRs’ progress pre- and post- training on a monthly basis. Also,

contractors should implement a process to evaluate the CSRs' retention of training information on a quarterly basis.

7. Reports

a. Beginning Fiscal Year 2006, contractors shall report in CSAMS the following:

(1) the number of hours per month that the contractor closed for training, during normal business hours

(2) the number of hours used for training on Federal holidays.

b. Copies of CMS written approval, training schedule, training plan, training materials, as well as CSR attendance sheets, shall be made available upon request.

8. CMS Monitoring

For monitoring purposes, contractors' telephone systems shall allow calls from CMS or CMS's representatives to CSRs. These CMS callers will not have a provider number.