

Introduction to the MLN Product & Resource Guide

Have you ever had difficulty locating information on specific Medicare topics, such as medical review, remittance advice, or hospice payment policy? Imagine then how difficult it must sometimes be for our Medicare fee-for-service (FFS) providers to obtain information on all of the many policies and rules they must follow to receive correct Medicare payments for the services they provide to Medicare beneficiaries. We all know that the Medicare Program is very complex and Medicare providers are often faced with uncertainty when it comes to keeping up with all of the continuing changes in Medicare policy. This is especially true since the passage of the Medicare Modernization Act—one of the most sweeping changes to affect the Medicare Program in its history. As the number of seniors eligible for Medicare increases, it becomes more important than ever for health care professionals who provide care to these seniors to have a good understanding of the Medicare Program and its various business functions. That is why we created the **Medicare Learning Network, (MLN)**, a brand name for official CMS national FFS provider education products, as well as this *MLN Product & Resource Guide*.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) uses a three-tiered provider information, education, and outreach approach that involves the cooperative efforts of the Medicare FFS Contractor, Regional Office (RO), and Central Office (CO) staff. Generally speaking, CO staff is responsible for national provider outreach efforts, while RO and Medicare FFS Contractor staff interact with State and local professional associations and individual providers. However, we recognize that there are many instances when these roles are intermingled, e.g., RO staff is asked to represent CMS at national provider association conferences being held at or near the location of an RO. Therefore, it is important that all three components work together to ensure that they deliver consistent, accurate, and timely information to all Medicare FFS providers.

The *MLN Product & Resource Guide* has been developed for CMS staff and Medicare contractors who are involved with Medicare FFS provider outreach, whether that be by hosting an exhibit booth at a provider conference, hosting informal meetings with State and local provider associations, or meeting one-on-one with individual providers. The *Guide* is designed to familiarize CMS and Medicare contractor staff with the inventory of MLN products and assist in targeted product selection when conducting provider outreach events. It provides descriptive information on all of the MLN educational products available to the Medicare FFS provider community, as well as other CMS educational resources. The *Guide* is divided into categories of information based on provider type (e.g., sections contain materials suitable for “All” Medicare providers, Medicare Part A providers, Medicare Part B providers, etc.,) and, in some cases, based on a specific topic area (e.g., Preventive Services or the National Provider Identifier (NPI)). Each MLN product is described on an individual page and placed under the appropriate category within the *Guide*. Many products are listed in several different categories. You will find the category (or categories) and media type listed on the bottom of each product page. We have also included a chart that lists each of the products and the provider type or audience for which it is intended.

Hopefully this information will enable you to better target the products and resources you make available to the specific audiences with whom you interact, and will ultimately assist Medicare FFS providers as they navigate the Medicare Program maze!

Overview of the Provider Communications Group

Just a little bit of background to help put Medicare FFS provider education and outreach activities in perspective. The **Provider Communications Group (PCG)** in the Center for Medicare Management (CMM) has overall responsibility for national Medicare FFS provider education development, and has the lead for many provider outreach activities. PCG works with CO and RO staff within CMS, Medicare FFS contractors, and national provider associations to ensure that Medicare FFS providers and staff who work with them are kept abreast of new or revised Medicare policy, operations, and initiatives. PCG also facilitates easy access for Medicare providers to obtain pertinent information through provider-specific web pages, web-based tools, provider call centers, and electronic transactions including internet-based listservs and pilot programs. Specifically, PCG ~

- Develops national training programs and educational products for Medicare FFS providers and other healthcare professionals on new initiatives and changes to the Medicare program, in conjunction with CMS policy area experts;
- Develops strategies for disseminating consistent, accurate and user-friendly information to Medicare FFS healthcare professionals, including partnerships with national provider associations;
- Supports communication between CMS and the FFS healthcare community through the facilitation of Open Door Forums (www.cms.hhs.gov/OpenDoorForums) and meetings of the Participating Physician Advisory Committee (PPAC); (www.cms.hhs.gov/FACA/03_ppac.asp);
- Promotes awareness of Agency initiatives by sponsoring exhibit programs at healthcare industry conferences;
- Investigates, researches, and implements new technology and electronic methods to advance communications;
- Coordinates with other CMS CO components and RO staff to achieve effective provider communications.

The Medicare Learning Network



Within PCG there are four divisions that handle the Group's responsibilities¹. The **Division of Provider Information Planning & Development (DPIPD)** is responsible for planning, developing and implementing national Medicare FFS provider information and education programs. We achieve this through the **Medicare Learning Network (MLN)**—the brand name for official CMS national provider education products that are offered in a variety of media and are designed to promote national consistency of Medicare provider information developed for CMS initiatives. The MLN plays a key role in furthering the Agency's culture of responsiveness. Most importantly, we are here to help you!

¹ Organizational charts can be located at the end of this section.

MLN Web Pages

The MLN web page, located at www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNGenInfo , is the home for the most current Medicare FFS provider education. On our web page you will find links to the:

- **MLN Products Catalog**—an interactive catalog that provides descriptions and links to all MLN educational products and resources
- **MLN Matters Articles**—a series of plain-language national articles designed to inform the Medicare FFS health care professionals about the latest changes to the Medicare Program
- **MLN Products**—provides you with access to downloadable MLN educational products
- **MLN Educational Web Guides**—brings together all of the resources on a specific topic related to certain Medicare Fee-For-Service initiatives
- **MLN Product Ordering Page**—provides access for users to order hard copy versions of many of our products, free of charge!
- **Web-Based Training (WBT) Courses**—provides access to MLN WBTs on a variety of topics, free of charge!
- **CMS Mailing Lists**—provides access for users to subscribe to any of CMS' electronic mailing lists
- **Provider Call Center Toll-Free Numbers Directory**—offers FFS healthcare professionals information on how to contact their appropriate Medicare contractor provider call center

To download or order any product from the MLN, go to www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNProducts/ , select the subject from the left hand banner to find the product you are looking for and download it.

To order a hard copy product, scroll to the bottom of the page to the related link called MLN Product Ordering Page (http://cms.meridianksi.com/kc/main/kc_frame.asp?kc_ident=kc0001&loc=5) and proceed to select and order the product.

MLN Matters National Articles



CMS is committed to partnering with the Medicare FFS health care professional community to ensure that Medicare beneficiaries receive all of the health care services to which they are entitled.

MLN Matters Articles are a series of national articles designed to inform Medicare providers about the latest changes to the Medicare Program (commonly referred to as Change Requests). Articles are prepared in consultation with clinicians, billing experts, and CMS policy experts and are written in plain language. *MLN Matters* Articles help focus complex Medicare change information toward how that information affects specific providers--to give them only the information they need and thus reduce the amount of time they need to incorporate that information into their Medicare business functions.

MLN Matters Articles are a widely recognized provider education product covering a variety of topics. Therefore, **you should check to see if there are specific articles pertinent to the intended audience of your outreach activity.** The articles can be found at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNMattersArticles> on the CMS ebsite.. We also recommend that you subscribe to the MLN Matters listserv so that you are notified via e-mail when new or revised articles are posted. Go to <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/apps/maillinglists/> to sign up—and please encourage Medicare FFS healthcare professionals to sign up as well!

Other MLN Products

Medicare Learning Network products are offered in a variety of media such as articles, brochures, fact sheets, web-based training (WBT) courses and video programs. In this *Guide* you will find information on all of the MLN products currently available, grouped according to specific provider audiences.

The MLN Products web page is located at www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNProducts on the CMS website. Once there, you will find ~

- **MLN Products Catalog**-an interactive downloadable document that lists all MLN products. The on-line catalog provides live hyperlinks to MLN products.
- **MLN Product Ordering page**-allows you to order hard copy versions of many of our products free of charge.
- **MLN Publications List**-contains electronic versions of the MLN publications available for you to download.

Process for Requesting MLN Materials for Outreach Events

Step 1: Gather Pertinent Information on the Conference/Exhibit

- Name of Event
- Date
- Audience – Number of participants expected
- Location – Where is the Conference/exhibit being held (Place, Address)
“Ship to” Address for mailing materials
Is there a specific date when shipments will be accepted at the event?

Step 2: Check the *MLN Product and Resource Guide* and the *MLN Catalog* to see what types of materials you would like to use for your exhibit. You can access the *MLN Catalog* at www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNProducts on the CMS website.

Step 3: If you would like the materials sent to your office before the event, you may place an order through the Medicare Learning Network at www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNProducts on the CMS website. You must allow **4-6 weeks for delivery**. If you would like the materials sent to the event, you must contact Andrea Yost at andrea.yost@cms.hhs.gov or her back-up, Van Ross, at van.ross@cms.hhs.gov via e-mail. Note: You will receive confirmation that your request is being processed. Samples of larger publications and newer products will be included for display purposes only.

Step 4: If you are requesting marketing items/giveaways, contact Andrea Yost at andrea.yost@cms.hhs.gov or her back-up, Van Ross, at van.ross@cms.hhs.gov via e-mail. Note: marketing giveaways change regularly; therefore, we cannot guarantee specific items. Supplies will be shipped according to availability.

Other Helpful Provider Information Resources

~ Provider Communications PowerPoint Slide Presentation ~

This presentation, including talking points for the speaker, can be found on the CMS website at http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNProducts/60_ContractorTraining.asp. It has been developed to assist CMS staff when presenting to Medicare FFS health care professionals about the current Medicare initiatives and the resources that are available to them to stay abreast of Medicare information. This presentation can be edited to meet the needs of your audience. The first and last slides should be edited to include the speaker's name and title. The presentation includes many web addresses, so it may be helpful to print and distribute the slides to meeting participants. Be sure to check the accuracy of your presentation as this PPT is updated on a quarterly basis.

~CMS Website~

- The CMS website, www.cms.hhs.gov, is a valuable resource that provides quick access to timely and pertinent Medicare information. In particular, the **Medicare FFS Provider-Specific Web Pages** are available for all provider types including hospitals, home health agencies, and practice administrators. Most provider-specific web pages also offer assorted listserv sign-ups. We encourage you to let providers know how easy it is to sign up for any of our listservs. Please see the MLN publication, “*CMS -- Keeping in touch with Medicare Fee-for-Service Providers*” at http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNProducts/downloads/MailingLists_FactSheet.pdf for additional details.

Feedback/Comments

We hope that you will find this *Guide* a useful resource as you continue your Medicare FFS provider outreach activities. We very much appreciate the assistance you provide us with spreading the word to the provider community about the availability of MLN products. Additionally, we value any feedback you can give us regarding our products either from you and your colleagues, or from the providers with whom you interact.

You can send your feedback, questions or comments to the MLN mailbox at MLN@cms.hhs.gov or you can contact us directly through Richie Frieman (Richie.frieman@cms.hhs.gov) at (410) 786-2308 or Karen Pardue (Karen.pardue@cms.hhs.gov) at (410) 786-4527.

For questions and feedback you receive during an outreach event, we have provided a sample template that you may find useful in collecting the pertinent information. Again, we ask that you forward any education/outreach-related feedback to the above-listed contacts. Thanks very much!