

**Meeting of the Advisory Panel on Outreach and Education (APOE)
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)**

**Virtual Meeting
September 15, 2021**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Open Meeting

Lisa Carr, Designated Federal Official (DFO), Partner Relations Group, Office of Communications (OC), CMS

Ms. Carr called the virtual meeting to order at 12:06 p.m. She welcomed all participants and noted that she serves as the Designated Federal Official (DFO) to ensure compliance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). She explained that questions about FACA compliance can be emailed to her at lisa.carr@cms.hhs.gov. Ms. Carr noted that APOE members would hear comments from the public at the conclusion of the presentations. She directed those who wish to participate in public comments to email Joanna Case at jcase@betah.com. Because this time segment is set aside for comments only, Ms. Carr asked that questions be directed to her email address. She then turned over the meeting to Ms. Stefanie Costello.

Welcome and Opening Comments

Stefanie Costello, Director, CMS Partner Relations Group

Ms. Costello welcomed meeting attendees and made note of the two presentations on the agenda—Feedback on Health Insurance Marketplace Outreach Materials and Partner Engagement, and Medicare Learning Network Updates. She then turned the meeting over to Dr. Margot Savoy, APOE Chair.

Opening Comments and Panel Introductions

Dr. Margot Savoy, APOE Chair

Cheri Lattimer, APOE Vice-Chair

Dr. Savoy greeted participants and noted that the meeting is open to the press and the public, all discussion is on the record, and the opinions expressed by panel members are those of the individuals and not the organizations with which they are associated. She clarified that APOE members' responsibility is to listen to public comments, not to respond to those comments during the meeting.

Dr. Savoy then asked panel members to introduce themselves.

Dr. Savoy noted that Scott Ferguson and Kelly Goode were not able to attend the meeting. She added that CMS staff continues to interview candidates to replace the four outgoing APOE members and new panelists may be onboarded by the next APOE meeting.

CMS Response to APOE Recommendations from the July 28, 2021 Meeting

Stefanie Costello, Director, CMS Partner Relations Group

Ms. Costello informed participants that the APOE recommendations from the July 28, 2021 meeting were included in the meeting packets, and turned the meeting back to Dr. Savoy.

Appreciation of Departing APOE Panel Members

Dr. Margot Savoy, APOE Chair

Cheri Lattimer, APOE Vice-Chair

Dr. Savoy recognized outgoing APOE members David Goldberg, Angie Boddie, and Nazleen Bharmal who have resigned from the panel, as well as Leslie Fried for whom this was her last meeting. She thanked them for their contributions to the APOE's work and noted that each will receive a Certificate of Appreciation.

Feedback on Health Insurance Marketplace Outreach Materials and Partner Engagement

Stefanie Costello, Director, CMS Partner Relations Group

Ms. Costello informed the panel that the Health Insurance Marketplace was able to enroll 2.8 million people during the summer 2021 Special Enrollment Period under the American Rescue Plan (ARP). She said the regular Marketplace enrollment period will begin this fall, with a focus on new strategies for effective outreach and increased partner engagement to reach the millions of Americans who are still uninsured.

Ms. Costello said that CMS aims to reach these consumers with content that helps them understand the importance of health insurance and its increased affordability under the ARP. As part of this outreach, CMS is seeking partnerships with organizations that have not worked with the agency before. Surveys indicate that a significant number of consumers were unaware of the Special Enrollment Period and did not realize that expanded health insurance savings were available. Nevertheless, increased funding under ARP quadrupled the number of insurance Navigators who can make robust, on-the-ground connections with community groups.

Discussion of Recommendations among APOE Members and Ms. Costello

The panel made a series of preliminary recommendations in four key areas:

Provide simple, targeted multimedia messaging that occurs throughout the year – The APOE's recommendations for more effective messaging included boosted social media ads and apps that target specific audiences to answer questions about health insurance enrollment; content that connects the benefits of health insurance with community values, such as family and finances;

content that highlights health insurance benefits beyond disease management, including better access to community resources, medication management, medical equipment, and social services; graphics and customizable templates describing how the ARP broadens health insurance availability and affordability; video testimonials and how-to guides; bulleted one-page information sheets with graphics; and information materials co-branded by CMS and state-based Marketplaces.

Expand partnerships and the scope of target audiences – The APOE’s recommendations for expanded partnerships included physician and hospital groups, the media, health and community networks, grassroots organizations, Area Agencies on Aging, university-based extension centers, state-based Marketplaces, state medical societies and State Health Insurance Programs (SHIPs), utility and telecommunications providers, the IRS, small employers, YMCAs, faith-based groups, senior organizations, COVID-19 vaccination sites, and local health departments, particularly those with WIC programs. The recommendations for broadening target audiences included a greater range of age groups, consumers who have lost their jobs, consumers considering retirement who are not yet eligible for Medicare, and consumers who turn 26 and are no longer covered by their parents’ insurance.

Increase consumer/partner understanding of health insurance affordability – The panel recommended that affordability issues require greater clarification, including whether and when ARP provisions will end; how eligibility is affected by job loss, COBRA, unemployment benefits, graduation, and transitioning off of parental insurance; and how to reach people with financial challenges who are receiving other benefits.

Provide effective messaging with events-in-a-box – The panel recommended that a variety of boxes be available that customize content for target groups, provide options for both virtual and physical events, address the needs of groups that lack the resources to print out extensive materials, and provide social media targeted to specific audiences and communities.

Medicare Learning Network® Updates

Letitia English, Director, Division of Provider Information Planning & Development, CMS Center for Medicare

Ms. English prefaced her remarks by describing her previous association with the APOE, when she worked at the Office of Communications and solicited the panel’s annual recommendations for the “Medicare & You” handbook.

Ms. English explained that the Medicare Learning Network® (MLN) educates Fee-for-Service providers on subjects that include Medicare billing, claims processing, preventive services, payment systems, and provider compliance. MLN educational resources include articles, factsheets, booklets, guides, web-based training and content, and videos.

Ms. English updated APOE members on several recent MLN initiatives:

Cognitive Assessment and Care Plan Services – The MLN has posted webpage content, including video, at [CMS.gov/cognitive](https://www.cms.gov/cognitive) to inform providers about the services available to patients who have demonstrated cognitive impairment. The content covers what services are included, who can provide them, who is eligible for them, and how billing and payment work. The MLN also sends a direct mail letter and fact sheet to providers.

COVID-19 Provider Toolkit – This online toolkit provides up-to-date information at [CMS.gov/covidvax-provider](https://www.cms.gov/covidvax-provider), including content on coding, payment, billing, and administering the COVID vaccine.

Achieving Health Equity Web-Based Training – The MLN developed a two-hour web-based training session titled “Achieving Health Equity” with a focus on reducing health disparities, fostering a culture of equity, and improving the quality of health care for all people. The MLN is also exploring how to make the content available in smaller segments and/or different formats for those who cannot devote two hours to the full training session. Other training subjects in the series include Improving Health Care Quality for LGBTQ+ People and a soon-to-be posted session on Modernizing Health Care to Improve Physical Accessibility. The MLN is also developing a session on language access.

Provider Communications Study – Ms. English explained that the MLN regularly evaluates its communications efforts to ensure they meet audience needs based on preferences and best practices, and is about to begin a two-phase Provider Communications Study. The formative phase includes a literature review, an environmental scan, analytics, and a provider survey. The summative phase includes a product review of MLN content. The MLN will gather recommendations for content improvement through an online survey of providers and staff who serve or bill Medicare beneficiaries. Ms. English invited APOE members to participate in the survey.

She concluded that the MLN Connects® Newsletter keeps readers up-to-date on MLN program news, including events and new products. The newsletter is accessible by searching “MLN Connects” on the MLN home page.

Discussion of Recommendations among APOE Members and Ms. English

Following the discussion, the panel made a series of preliminary recommendations.

Health equity – The APOE recommendations emphasized the importance of health equity in improving health care and eliminating unconscious systemic biases, concepts that need to be broadly understood among all participants in the health care system, not just providers. One way to raise awareness is to include health equity requirements in medical credentialing. The requirements could include CME/CE credits for license and certification renewals across the spectrum of health care providers—physicians, physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech pathologists, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, etc.—as well as credentialing and

certification for hospitals, health centers, insurers, and associations at the national, state, and local level.

Effective Medicare messaging – The APOE members recommended a variety of ways to deliver more effective messaging on health equity as well as other Medicare topics. These recommendations included microlearning segments for professionals who find it difficult to allocate multiple hours to web-based training; assessments to determine audiences’ knowledge level and ensure that trainers are qualified and appropriate to deliver the information; and training content that is interesting, applicable, and regularly updated with the latest information.

Increased reach of Medicare messaging – The APOE members recommended avenues for delivering MLN information to reach new and broader audiences. These included exploring whether Medicare topics can be introduced on non-CME podcasts; presenting topics as tracks at meetings/conferences and through information booths; teaming on Medicare messaging with the 40 nationwide HRSA Geriatric Workforce Education Programs (GWEPs); targeting health care consultants and small/private clinics for Medicare training; and broadly disseminating the direct link to the MLN’s webpage among associations, disease-based groups such as the Alzheimer’s Association, community-based groups, providers, consumers, and employers.

Public Comment

Dr. Margot Savoy, APOE Chair

Dr. Savoy noted that no one signed up to give public comments.

Final Comments

Dr. Margot Savoy, APOE Chair

Dr. Savoy once again thanked Ms. Fried for her service on the panel. Dr. Savoy announced that the next APOE meeting is likely to be held virtually in February 2022 so that the panel can incorporate information about CMS’ work on open enrollment periods for Medicare and the health insurance Marketplace. She reiterated that the APOE staff is actively reviewing applicants for panel membership and expressed hope that they could be welcomed at the February meeting. Dr. Savoy thanked the APOE members for an excellent job delivering helpful recommendations and advice.

Adjourn

Lisa Carr, DFO, OC, CMS

Ms. Carr thanked meeting participants and adjourned the meeting at 1:44 p.m.