

Next Generation ACO Model

Voluntary Alignment Frequently Asked Questions

Beneficiaries and Caregivers

April 2019

Some Medicare beneficiaries may have recently received a letter in the mail or from their doctor asking them to confirm their main doctor or doctor's office. These letters are associated with a Medicare initiative called the Next Generation Accountable Care Organization (ACO) Model. Organizations participating in this initiative are called Next Generation ACOs. These letters give beneficiaries the option to complete a paper form to confirm where they receive their medical care. Beneficiaries also have the option of selecting their main source of care online through MyMedicare.gov. Completing the form or making a selection through MyMedicare.gov is optional for beneficiaries. Even if you don't complete the form or make a selection through MyMedicare.gov, your Medicare benefits will not change and you can continue to see any doctor or other health care provider that accepts Medicare.

For more information or for resources available to answer your questions, please refer to the end of this document.

Q1. What is this letter? What does it mean for me?

This letter explains that your doctor or other health care provider where you receive care is participating in a Next Generation ACO, an initiative where health care providers who share a common vision of improving patient care can work together more effectively. You are receiving this letter because your health care provider thinks that you might benefit from care coordination and preventive services offered through the Next Generation ACO. Whether or not you choose to complete the form or make a selection through MyMedicare.gov, your benefits do not change and you can continue to receive care from any doctor, hospital, or other health care provider.

¹ For more information regarding ACOs, see the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) publication *Medicare and You*, (2019) available at <https://www.medicare.gov/forms-help-resources/medicare-you-handbook/download-medicare-you-in-different-formats>

Q2. What is an Accountable Care Organization (ACO)?

Accountable Care Organizations, or ACOs, are groups of doctors, hospitals, and other health care professionals, who come together voluntarily to give coordinated high quality care to the Medicare patients they serve. Coordinated care may include talking with your different medical providers to manage your medications and may also include providing you with certain preventive care services. ACO services vary but can include access to home visits or providing you with a list of resources in your community where you can get other services you may want or need.

Q3. Why does the letter refer to an organization I've never heard of?

The name is the name of a Next Generation ACO, which is an entity that works with a number of different participating medical providers, such as primary care practices, hospitals, specialists, pharmacies, and other Medicare-enrolled providers to provide care for patients. You may be familiar with a doctor or other health care provider participating in the Next Generation ACO, but

not with the name of the Next Generation ACO itself. If you have questions about the Next Generation ACO listed on your letter, you may call their number that is provided in the letter.

Q4. Are you trying to sell me something? What does this cost me?

No, we are not selling anything. There is no additional cost to you as a result of your health care provider's participation in a Next Generation ACO and no change to your Medicare benefits. Your Medicare benefits will remain the same and you will continue to have access to any Medicare enrolled provider or supplier.

Q5. Is Medicare changing my doctor?

No. Receiving or signing the form or making a selection through MyMedicare.gov does not affect your Medicare benefits in any way. Medicare is not changing your doctor or other health care provider and you can still see any doctor or other health care provider you choose that is enrolled in Medicare. Completing the form or making a selection through MyMedicare.gov is meant to help your doctor or other health care provider better coordinate your care.

Q6. The health care provider listed on the form is incorrect. What should I do?

If the doctor or other health care provider listed on the form is not your main doctor or other source of care, do not sign the form. Not completing the form will not change your existing benefits and you can continue to receive your medical services from your current health care provider. You may contact the Next Generation ACO (using the phone number provided in the letter) to request a corrected form with the name of your main doctor or group practice. You may also choose to select your main doctor or other source of care through MyMedicare.gov.

Q7. My neighbor, friend, spouse, family member, etc. and I have the same doctor, but they did not receive the form. Can they get the letter too? How?

Any Original Medicare beneficiary may request a form by contacting the Next Generation ACO or at their next doctor's visit. You may share the Next Generation ACO's contact information with your neighbor, friend, spouse, family member, etc. if they are interested in receiving a form. They may also directly select any Medicare doctor or other health care provider as their main source of care through MyMedicare.gov.

Q8. What happens if I don't fill out the form or make a selection through MyMedicare.gov?

The form or online selection is optional. If you choose to complete the form or make the online selection or if you choose not to complete the form or not to make the online selection, your Medicare benefits will not change in any way and you can still see any doctor or other health care provider of your choosing.

Q9. How can I change my decision after I've completed the form?

If after completing the form, you change your mind about whether the doctor or group practice listed on the form is the main place you receive care, you can contact the Next Generation ACO using the phone number on the letter that accompanied the form to reverse your previous decision. You may also indicate your main source of care through [MyMedicare.gov](https://www.mymedicare.gov). This designation would take precedence over the form you completed.

Q10. Are these letters legitimate?

Forms used by participants in the Next Generation ACO Model to request that beneficiaries identify their main source of care are legitimate Medicare documents and part of an ongoing Medicare initiative. You can contact 1-800-MEDICARE for additional information. Also, if you have any concerns, suggestions, or comments to share, please contact the CMS Next Generation team at: NextGenerationACOModel@cms.hhs.gov.

Q11. Can I still see my specialist at another group practice and can I still go to my preferred hospital?

You will still have the right to receive care from any doctor, hospital, or other health care provider that is enrolled in Medicare. Your health care providers will continue to recommend specialists and hospitals for your specific health needs. One of the goals of this initiative is to improve coordination of care, which Next Generation ACOs are best able to do when the beneficiaries receiving care from a doctor or group practice associated with the ACO are aligned to the ACO.

Q12. What does this mean for my care while I am in a location other than my area of residence?

You will still have the right to receive care from any doctor, or hospital, or other health care provider that is enrolled in Medicare.

Q13. What if I don't want to be in the Next Generation ACO?

You can choose to not be voluntarily aligned to an ACO by not signing this form and not making a selection through MyMedicare.gov. Even if you do not sign the form or make a selection through MyMedicare.gov, you may still be included in an ACO if you receive primary care from a doctor or other health care provider participating in an ACO. However you may elect not to have most of your personally identifiable medical information shared with an ACO through the data opt-out process. For more information on this process and/or to obtain a data opt-out form please contact 1-800-MEDICARE.

Q14. What does the Next Generation ACO do with my health information?

The only information that Medicare will send to the ACO is from the bills that it received for your care in the past three years and going forward. This does not include doctors' notes or images. Those who are involved in your treatment will see your information to identify risks for hospital admission, to enroll you, if needed, in a care management program or to reach out to you for screenings, vaccinations, or health education. You may elect not to have your personal identifiable medical information shared with an ACO through the data opt-out process. For more information on this process and/or to obtain a data opt-out form please contact 1-800-MEDICARE.

Q15. How will Medicare help ensure quality of care?

As a Medicare ACO, the ACO will be required to meet robust quality standards based upon, among other measures, patient outcomes and care coordination among the provider team. ACOs' performance on these measures are publicly posted on the CMS website.

Q16. Where can I find out more information about ACOs, the Next Generation ACO Model, and the voluntary alignment initiative?

If you have any further questions about ACOs you may ask your doctor, contact the ACO by using the phone number on the letter that accompanied the form, contact your local State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP), or call Medicare at 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048. You can also get more information online at the websites below:

CMS Website:

<http://www.medicare.gov/acos.html>

Next Generation ACO Model and Voluntary Alignment:

<https://innovation.cms.gov/initiatives/Next-Generation-ACO-Model/>

To find contact information for your local State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) visit:

<https://www.shiptacenter.org/>

You can find this information at the back of your *Medicare and You 2019 Handbook* as well.

Q17. Who do I contact if I suspect fraud or abuse?

Contact your local Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) Program to report suspected Medicare fraud and abuse. There is an SMP Program in every state. The SMP Program educates and empowers people with Medicare to take an active role in detecting and preventing health care fraud and abuse. The SMP Program not only protects people with Medicare, it also helps preserve Medicare. You can also contact your local SMP Program to get personalized counseling, find out about community events in your area, or volunteer. For more information or to find your local SMP Program, visit <http://www.smpresource.org/>. You can also contact the following resources:

- Call us at 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). TTY users can call 1-877-486-2048.
- [Report it online to the Office of the Inspector General.](#)
- Call the Office of the Inspector General at 1-800-HHS-TIPS (1-800-447-8477). TTY: 1-800-377-4950.