



News Flash - November is American Diabetes Month® ~ The American Diabetes Association has designated American Diabetes Month® as a time to communicate the seriousness of diabetes and the importance of proper diabetes control. Left undiagnosed, diabetes can lead to serious complications such as heart disease, stroke, blindness, kidney damage, lower-limb amputations and premature death. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) reminds health care professionals that Medicare provides coverage of diabetes screening tests for beneficiaries at risk for diabetes or those diagnosed with pre-diabetes. Medicare also provides coverage for services to help beneficiaries effectively manage their diabetes. Coverage of these services is subject to certain eligibility and other limitations. For more information about Medicare's coverage of diabetes screening services, diabetes self-management training, and medical nutrition therapy services, including coverage, coding, billing, and reimbursement guidelines, visit the CMS Medicare Learning Network (MLN) Preventive Services Educational Products web page at http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNProducts/35_PreventiveServices.asp on the CMS website.

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Preparing for a Transition from an FI/Carrier to a Medicare Administrative Contractor (MAC)

Provider Types Affected

All fee-for-service physicians, providers, and suppliers who submit claims to Fiscal Intermediaries (FIs), Carriers or Regional Home Health Intermediaries (RHHIs) for services provided to Medicare beneficiaries. **Providers already billing Medicare Administrative Contractors (MACs) have already transitioned and need not review this article.**

Impact on Providers

This article is intended to assist all providers that will be affected by Medicare Administrative Contractor (MAC) implementations. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is providing this information to make you aware of what to expect as your FI or carrier transitions its work to a MAC. Knowing what to expect and preparing as outlined in this article will minimize disruption in your Medicare business.

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Background

Medicare Contracting Reform (or section 911 of the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003) mandates that the Secretary for Health & Human Services replace the current contracting authority to administer the Medicare Part A and Part B Fee For Service (FFS) programs, contained under Sections 1816 and 1842 of the Social Security Act, with the new Medicare Administrative Contactor authority. Medicare Contracting Reform requires that CMS conduct full and open competitions, in compliance with general federal contracting rules, for the work currently handled by FIs and carriers in administering the Medicare fee-for-service program.

When completed there will be 15 new MACs processing Part A and Part B claims. Each MAC will handle roughly the same volume of work. Because of this, the MACs will vary in geographic size but not necessarily in the amount of work they handle. This should result in greater consistency in the interpretation of Medicare policies.

MAC Implementation Milestones Definitions

There are specific milestones in the cutover from carrier or FI work to MAC. In this article, providers are advised to be aware of, and to take specific action, relative to the milestones defined below:

Award – this is the point at which a MAC is announced as having won the contract for specific FI or carrier work.

Cutover – This is the date on which carrier or FI work ceases and MAC work begins. Cutover is often done in phases by State-level jurisdictions.

Pre - Award

If you are in a jurisdiction where a new MAC has not yet been awarded, you can remain current with updates on Medicare contracting reform by visiting <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/medicarecontractingreform/> on the CMS website.

Post- Award

Once the award to the MAC is made, you should immediately begin to prepare for the cutover. The following are recommendations to help you in this effort:

- **Pay attention to the mail** you receive from your outgoing Medicare contractor and your new MAC--you will be receiving letters and listserv messages about the cutover from both. These letters should include discussions on what, if any, impact the cutover will have on your payment schedule, issuance of checks, impact on paper and

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electronic claims processing, electronic fund transfers, etc.

- **Sign up for your new MAC's listserv.** While in many cases the list of providers that were in the jurisdiction of the outgoing Medicare contractor will be shared with the incoming MAC, that may not always be the case. Getting on the MAC listserv distribution will ensure that you receive news as it happens concerning the implementation.
- **Access and bookmark the MAC's website and visit it regularly.** The MAC will have a new website that will have general information, news and updates, information on the MAC's requirements of providers, copies of newsletters and information on meetings and conference calls that are being conducted by the MAC.
- **Review the Frequently-Asked Questions (FAQs) on the MAC's website.**
- **Participate in the MAC's advisory groups and "Ask the Contractor" meetings.** Every MAC will be conducting conference calls to give providers the opportunity to ask questions and have open discussion. Take advantage of the opportunity to communicate with the new MAC!
- **Review the MAC's local coverage determinations (LCDs)** as they may be different from the outgoing contractor LCDs. The MAC must provide education on LCDs. Providers should monitor MAC communications and website for information regarding potential changes to the LCDs.

One Month Prior to Cutover

- **Complete and return your Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) agreements.** CMS requires that each provider currently enrolled for EFT complete a new CMS-588 for the new MAC. (If your new MAC is the same entity as your current FI/carrier, then a new EFT agreement is not needed.) This form is a legal agreement between you and the MAC that allows funds to be deposited into your bank account. It is critical for the MAC to receive these forms before any payments are issued. Complete the CMS-588 and get it to the MAC to ensure that there is no delay or disruption in payment. We encourage you to do this no later than 60 days prior to cutover. Contact your MAC with any questions concerning the agreement.
 - The CMS-588 form can be found at

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<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/cmsforms/downloads/CMS588.pdf> on the CMS website.

- You are encouraged to submit the agreements no later than 60 days prior to the planned cutovers. To do so, you will need to note the mailing address for the form, which is available on the MAC's website. Your contractor may also provide instructions on its website on accurately completing the form.
- Your new MAC may also request you to execute a new **Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) Trading Partner Agreement** as well. If so, be sure to complete that agreement timely. Some helpful information on such agreements is available at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/EducationMaterials/download/TradingPartner-8.pdf> on the CMS website.
- Some (not all) MAC contractors may assign you a new EDI submitter/receiver and logon IDs as the cutover date approaches. Review your mailings from the MAC and/or their website for information about assignment of new IDs and whether you have to do anything to get those IDs. The MAC Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) staff will send these Submitter IDs and passwords to you in hardcopy or electronically. **You don't need to do anything to get the new IDs**, however, if you do receive a new ID and password, CMS strongly suggests that you contact the incoming MAC to test these IDs. Since there may be a different Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) Platform, it is critical to consider testing to minimize any disruption to your business at cutover.
- **Contact your claims processing vendor and clearinghouse** to ensure that they are aware of all changes affecting their ability to process claims with the new MAC. Ask your vendor, "Are you using the new contractor number or ID of the new MAC, submitter number and logon ID?"; "Have you tested with the MAC?"
- Because the contractor number is changing, your EDI submissions need to reflect the new MAC number at cutover.
- Be aware that some MACs may offer participation in an "early boarding" process for electronic claims submission

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and/or Electronic Remittance Advice (ERA). This will enable submitters the ability to convert to the new MAC prior to cutover. If you are currently receiving ERAs, you will continue to do so after cutover. As mentioned previously, some MACs may assign a new submitter/receiver ID and password –watch for and document them for use after cutover to the MAC.

Cutover Weekend

- Be aware that in certain situations, CMS will have the outgoing Medicare contractor release claims payments a few days early in preparation for implementation weekend. Providers will be notified prior to the cutover date if they will receive such payments. While the net payments are the same, providers will experience increased total payments followed by no payments for a two week period.
- Be aware that providers may also experience system "**dark days**" around cutover weekends. Providers will be notified by the MAC or outgoing contractor if a dark day(s) is planned for the MAC implementation. During a dark day, the Part A provider will have limited EDI processing and no access to Fiscal Intermediary Standard System (FISS) to conduct claim entry or claim correction, verify beneficiary eligibility and claim status. Those providers who currently bill carriers may also experience some limited access to certain functions, such as beneficiary eligibility and claims status on dark days.
- Be aware that some Interactive Voice Response (IVR) functionality may also be unavailable during a dark day.

Post-Cutover

- The first 1-2 weeks may be extremely busy at the MAC. The outgoing Medicare contractor will have the "in-process" work delivered to the new MAC shortly after cutover. It takes a week in most cases to get that workload into the system and distributed to staff.
- The new MAC will likely have new mailing addresses and telephone numbers or will transition the outgoing contractor toll free number for use.

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- Be prepared that you may experience longer than normal wait times for Customer Service Representatives and lengthier calls the first few weeks after implementation. The telephone lines are always very busy immediately following cutover. The MAC's staff will carefully research and respond to new callers to be certain that there are no cutover issues that have not been discovered.
- **Learn how to use the MAC's IVR.** The MAC IVR software and options may be different from the outgoing FI or carrier. A new IVR can take time to learn. Most calls are currently handled by IVR. If users are unfamiliar and resort to calling the Contact Center Representative (CSR) line, the result is a spike in volume of calls to (CSRs) that are difficult to accommodate.
- Check the MAC's outreach and education event schedule on the MAC's and outgoing Contractor's websites. It is recommended that you have staff attend some of the education courses that may be offered by the MAC.
- Be aware that there may be changes in faxing policies (e.g., for medical records).
- Be aware that you may experience changes in Remittance Advice (RA) coding. While the combination of codes used on the RA is often directed by CMS, there may be payment situations where the codes used on the RA are at the discretion of the contractor. In addition, some contractors may have their own informational codes that they use on paper RA for some payment situations.

CMS Post-Cutover Monitoring

Post-cutover is the CMS-designated period of time beginning with the MAC's operational date. During the post-cutover period, CMS will monitor the MAC's operations and performance closely to ensure the timely and correct processing of the workload that was transferred. The post-cutover period is generally three months, but it may vary in length depending on the progress of the implementation.

Additional Assistance

There are three attachments at the end of this article to assist you in keeping informed of the progress of the cutover as well as documenting important information:

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- Attachment A is a summary of what you need to do and information you will need.;
- Attachment B may be used to track communications offered by the MAC, such as training classes and conferences, and your staff participation; and
- Attachment C may be used to assist you in tracking major MAC milestones.

Additional Information

The following MLN Matters article provides additional information about the MAC implementation process:

- MM5979: "Assignment of Providers to Medicare Administrative Contractors" located at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNMattersArticles/downloads/mm5979.pdf> on the CMS website.

If you have questions, please contact your Medicare carrier, FI, A/B MAC, and/or RHHI, at their toll-free number, which may be found at

<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNProducts/downloads/CallCenterTolINumDirectory.zip> on the CMS website.

News Flash - "Flu season is here! Medicare patients give many reasons for not getting their annual flu shot, including—"It causes the flu"; "I don't need it"; "It has side effects"; "It's not effective"; "I didn't think about it"; "I don't like needles!" The fact is that every year in the United States, on average, about 36,000 people die from influenza. Greater than 90 percent of these deaths occur in individuals 65 years of age and older. You can help your Medicare patients overcome these odds and their personal barriers through patient education. Talk with your Medicare patients about the importance of getting an annual flu shot--and don't forget to immunize yourself and your staff. Protect yourself, your patients, and your family and friends. **Get Your Flu Shot – Not the Flu.**

Remember - Influenza vaccine plus its administration are covered Part B benefits. Note that influenza vaccine is NOT a Part D covered drug. For information about Medicare's coverage of the influenza virus vaccine and its administration as well as related educational resources for health care professionals and their staff, see http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNProducts/Downloads/flu_products.pdf on the CMS website. To download the Medicare Part B Immunization Billing quick reference chart, go to http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNProducts/downloads/gr_immun_bill.pdf on the CMS website. A copy of this quick reference chart can be ordered, free of charge, by going to the MLN Products web page and clicking on "MLN Product Ordering Page" in the Related Links Inside CMS section of the web page.

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Attachment A

TIMELINE AND CHECKLIST FOR PREPARING FOR MAC IMPLEMENTATION

Scheduled Award Date:

Actual Award Date:

MAC Scheduled Dark Days

MAC Contractor:

MAC Website:

MAC Contractor Number:

MAC Contact Center Number: 1-800-

MAC Mailing Address:

MAC EDI Mailing Address:

90 DAYS BEFORE CUTOVER

1. Visit MAC website and bookmark for future use
2. Join the MAC Listserv
3. **Monitor:**
 - LCDs Published by the new MAC; compare current LCD's that affect your practice's services.
4. **Review:**
 - Provider enrollment status for all providers, update as needed.
 - Pay-to address information for practice/providers, update as needed.
5. **Contact:**
 - Your Practice Management/Billing software vendor to determine if your system will be able to send & receive data to/from the new MAC.
 - Claims Clearinghouse (if used) to confirm they are or will be able to send and receive data to/from the new MAC.

75 DAYS BEFORE CUTOVER

1. Continue to check the MAC's website and/or Listserv for outreach programs, educational and informational events, and conference calls.
2. Check your state's Medical Society or local provider organization website for MAC transition information, MAC Coordinators.

60 DAYS BEFORE CUTOVER

1. If needed, submit CMS Form 588 – EDI form(s) to the new MAC
2. Consider registering for Electronic Remittance Advice (ERA) enrollment, if you are not already enrolled.

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3. Download or request a sample Remittance Advice (RA). RA codes are standard but use of codes may vary across contractors.

45 DAYS BEFORE CUTOVER

1. Monitor current carrier/FI claim submissions and follow-up any open or unanswered claims that are more than 30 days past submission date.
2. Begin staff training on the MAC transition, covering locations, LCDs, telephone and fax numbers and other changes.
3. Verify readiness of software vendor, clearinghouse(s) and other trading partners.

30 DAYS BEFORE CUTOVER

1. Continue to monitor current carrier/FI claim submissions and follow-up any open or unanswered claims that are more than 30 days past submission date.
2. New EDI Submitter ID number and password should be received.
3. New ERA enrollment confirmation should be received.
4. Submit test electronic claims.
5. Address and resolve any electronic claim issues within 10 business days.
6. Begin daily monitoring of e-mail from the MAC Listserv.

15 DAYS BEFORE CUTOVER

1. Continue to monitor current carrier/FI claim submissions.
2. Verify EDI and ERA connections are operational.
3. Collect and record all MAC telephone and fax numbers for: General Inquiry Customer Service, Provider Enrollment, Provider Relations, EDI and ERA.
4. Place test calls and become familiar with the MAC IVR query system.
5. Continue daily monitoring of the MAC Listserv.

10 DAYS BEFORE CUTOVER

1. Address any existing open items.
2. Continue daily monitoring of the MAC Listserv.

5-10 DAYS AFTER CUTOVER

1. Begin submitting claims to the new MAC.
2. Continue daily monitoring of the MAC listserv.
3. Monitor and follow up on the MAC Open Item list.

30 DAYS AFTER CUTOVER

1. Electronic payments should be arriving by now.
2. Payments for paper claims may be arriving by now.

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Attachment B

SCHEDULE OF MAC CONTRACTOR TRAINING CLASSES

Scheduled Date	Title of Class	Attendee

SCHEDULE OF MAC CONFERENCES

Scheduled Date	Conference Subject	Attendee

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Attachment C
Important MAC Implementation Dates

MAC Dark Days	
Cutoff Date for Claims Submission	
Last date Outgoing Contractor will make Payment	
Last date Outgoing Contractor will have Telephone/Customer Service	
Last date Outgoing Contractor will send file to Bank	
Date MAC will Accept Electronic Claims	
Date MAC will Accept Paper Claims	
Date Bill/Claim Cycle Begins	
First Anticipated MAC Payment Date	
Date MAC Begins Customer Service	

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