



CIO CHEAT SHEET

THE 411 ON CMS' INITIATIVE TO REPLACE THE SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER ON MEDICARE BENEFICIARY CARDS

WHAT CIOS NEED TO KNOW

November 2017

Background

Section 501 of the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act (MACRA) calls for the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) to remove social security numbers (SSNs) from beneficiary cards. The law does not mandate this be an identifier. In making these changes the law says, in part:

The Secretary of Health and Human Services, in consultation with the Commissioner of Social Security, shall establish cost effective procedures to ensure that a Social Security account number (or derivative thereof) is not displayed, coded, or embedded on the Medicare card issued to an individual who is entitled to benefits under part A of title XVIII or enrolled under part B of title XVIII and that any other identifier displayed on such card is not identifiable as a Social Security account number (or derivative thereof)."

Q. What is the timetable for replacing the SSN on the cards?

A. Medicare is moving ahead with plans to remove the SSN from Medicare beneficiary cards and replacing them with a different identifier beginning in 2018. MACRA requires CMS complete this work by April 2019. Cards will be distributed to beneficiaries between April 2018 and April 2019. Since the inception of the Medicare program, CMS has used the SSN as the Health Insurance Claim Number (HICN).

Q. Is CMS going to reach out to me about this change?

A. Yes. CMS has mailed letters to all providers. Your letter will contain specific information for your MAC. You can also view a [sample letter](#).

Q. When does my organization need to be ready?

A. Your systems and business processes must be ready to accept the new Medicare by April 2018 for transactions, such as billing, claim status, eligibility status, and interactions, with Medicare Administrative Contractor (MAC) contact centers. While you must be ready by April 1, 2018 to accept the new number, CMS has created a transition period from April 1, 2018 through April 1, 2019 during which time you can exchange information with CMS using the old numbers and the new numbers.

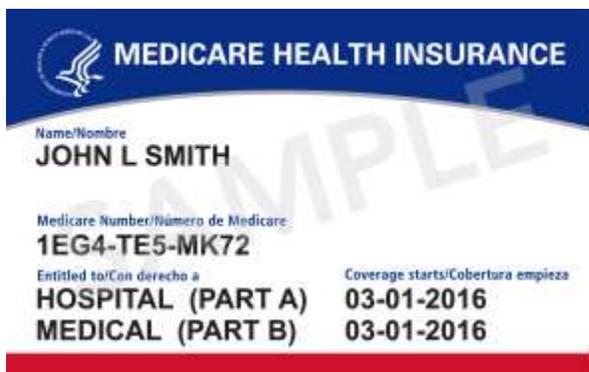
Q. What type of identifier will the SSN replace?



- A. CMS plans to replace the SSN with a randomly-generated identification number to be known as the Medicare Beneficiary Identifier or MBI. It is CMS' expectation that the MBI will be alphanumeric (only uppercase letters and no special characters) and will contain the same number of digits as the SSN (11 not to include the dashes). They also believe can be used in the same field on healthcare transactions as the SSN. The number will not contain any embedded intelligence.

Q. What does the new card look like?

- A. The MBI will contain letters and numbers. Here's an example: 1EG4-TE5-MK73. Below is a sample.



Q. What should I do to prepare my organization for this change?

- A. 1. Review the MBI format requirements [here](#); 2 Identify your patients who qualify for Medicare under the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) since you'll no longer be able to distinguish RRB patients by the number on the new Medicare card; 3) Update your practice management system's patient numbers to automatically accept the new Medicare number or MBI from the remittance advice (835) transaction; 4) If you use vendors to bill Medicare, contact them if they haven't already shared their new Medicare card system changes with you.

Q. Will there be a lookup function for the new number?

- A. Yes, however not until June 1, 2018. At that time, you will be able to look them up on your Medicare Administrative Contractor's (MAC) secure portal. [Sign up now.](#)

Q. Who will get a new number?

- A. All living and deceased beneficiaries.

Q. How many cards will be released?

- A. 150 million total including 60 million for active beneficiaries and 90 million for deceased / beneficiaries who have had their records archived.



Q. Who will generate the MBI?

A. CMS.

Q. Are there any other changes expected with the card?

Y. Gender and signatures will be removed.

Q. Can a MBI change for a person?

A. Generally, no unless the number has been compromised or for other yet to be determined reasons.

Q. Where can I go for more information?

A. Below are a few CMS links:

[CMS Fact Sheet](#)

[CMS bulletin](#)

[CMS email box for questions on the Initiative](#)

Q. What if I still have questions?

A. CMS has established an ombudsman to help providers transition through this change. The new CMS ombudsman for initiative, [Eugene Freund, MD](#) can be reached at NMCPProviderQuestions@cms.hhs.gov.