

Medicare Fee-For-Service (FFS) Physicians and Non-Physician Practitioners: Protecting Your Privacy – Protecting Your Medicare Enrollment Record

If you are a physician or non-physician practitioner who is enrolled in Medicare, or who is planning to enroll in Medicare, it is important that you protect your Medicare enrollment information from getting into the hands of dishonest and unscrupulous people – personal identity thieves and those intending to commit fraud in the Medicare Program. Now that the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has made available to you a method by which you can use the Internet to access your Medicare enrollment information, you will need to take proactive steps to protect your Medicare enrollment information.

Is Your Medicare Enrollment Information Current?

If you enrolled in Medicare or updated your Medicare enrollment information since 2003, your Medicare enrollment information is stored in the Provider Enrollment, Chain and Ownership System (PECOS). This is the national database in which Medicare contractors enter the Medicare enrollment information that you provided on the Medicare enrollment application.

If you are enrolled in Medicare, but have not updated your information since 2003, you are urged to submit an initial enrollment application in order to establish an enrollment record in PECOS.

Using Internet-based PECOS

CMS has made Internet-based PECOS available to physicians and non-physician practitioners as an alternative to completing and mailing paper enrollment applications. You can enroll in Medicare or update your Medicare enrollment information yourself, over the Internet. If you decide to use Internet-based PECOS to enroll or update your Medicare enrollment information, you will benefit in several ways: Internet-based PECOS ensures that you submit all required information; you can print your completed application/update for your records before you submit it electronically; you can print a list of required paper documentation that needs to be mailed to your Medicare contractor at the time you submit your application; you can check the status of your application/update by using the Internet; and your application/update is processed more quickly than a paper transaction.

Protecting Your Enrollment Data

Your Medicare enrollment information contains personal information. You need to protect it. You need to take steps to ensure that your Medicare enrollment information does not get into the hands of people who can use that information to commit fraud. We have made it easy for you to access Internet-based PECOS by enabling you to use the same User ID and password for Internet-based PECOS that you use for the National Plan and Provider Enumeration System (NPPES). You are responsible for your User ID and password because they provide access to your Medicare enrollment record in PECOS. It is essential that you take the appropriate steps to keep your User ID and password secure.

You should take the following actions to ensure the protection of your Medicare enrollment information:



- **Change your password in NPES before accessing Internet-based PECOS for the first time. At least once a year thereafter, change your password.** Although your User ID cannot be changed, you should periodically change your password – at least once a year.
- **Use Internet-based PECOS to view your enrollment data several times a year, checking to make sure the information has not been altered without your knowledge.** Any changes in your Medicare enrollment information would be ones that you submitted on paper to your local Medicare contractor or ones that you made yourself using Internet-based PECOS. Any other changes would be suspect and should be reported to your Medicare contractor immediately. Visit the CMS Provider/Supplier Enrollment web page at <http://www.cms.gov/medicareprovidersupenroll> to find telephone and mailing address information for the Medicare contractor serving your area.
- **Maintain your Medicare enrollment record.** You are required to report changes in your Medicare enrollment information. For additional information about reporting changes, go to the Downloads section of <http://www.cms.gov/medicareprovidersupenroll> on the CMS website.
- **Store any printed copies of your Medicare enrollment information, or copies of paper Form CMS-855 and Form CMS-588 (if appropriate), in a secure manner.** Do not let others have access to this information, as it contains your personal information, including your date of birth and your Social Security Number. Make sure copies are not left behind at the photocopy machine or on top of your desk or workspace.
- **Make sure your Medicare payments are electronic and go directly into your bank account.** Medicare requires newly enrolling providers and suppliers to complete Form CMS-588, Electronic Funds Transfer Authorization Agreement, if they are going to be paid directly by Medicare. Completing the Form CMS-588 will enable Medicare to send payments directly to a provider/supplier's bank account. If you are still receiving paper checks from Medicare, you need to complete this form and mail it to your Medicare contractor. The form can be downloaded at <http://www.cms.gov/cmsforms> on the CMS website.

Internet-based PECOS is a Secure Application

Internet-based PECOS meets all required Government security standards in terms of data entry and transmission.

PECOS is a Secure System

The electronic storage of your Medicare enrollment information in PECOS is secure. Medicare enrollment information can be entered into PECOS and viewed in PECOS only by authorized individuals at CMS or its Medicare contractors. These individuals are trained in security standards and are bound by agreements to protect your Medicare enrollment information. We do not disclose your Medicare enrollment information to anyone except when we are authorized or required to do so by law.

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