



CENTER FOR DRUG AND HEALTH PLAN CHOICE

TO: All Part C and D Sponsors

FROM: Cynthia G. Tudor, Ph.D., Director, Medicare Drug Benefit and C & D Data Group

DATE: December 19, 2008

SUBJECT: 2009 Call Center Monitoring

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) will expand its call center monitoring efforts in 2009. This memo describes the elements CMS will monitor and explains how to prepare for the monitoring studies. CMS will proceed with compliance actions against Part C and Part D sponsors that do not meet CMS' call center standards.

Call Center Monitoring Background

As in 2008, CMS, assisted by Research Triangle Institute (RTI) International, will monitor Part D current enrollee beneficiary call center phone lines and pharmacy technical help desk lines. In 2009, CMS will expand the scope of the monitoring effort to include Part C current and prospective enrollee beneficiary call center phone lines and Part D prospective enrollee beneficiary call center phone lines. CMS will continue to monitor hold times, disconnect rates, and the time it takes for an interactive voice response (IVR) or live customer service representative (CSR) to answer the phone.¹ Starting in 2009, CMS will also monitor the availability of interpreters for limited English proficient (LEP) beneficiaries²; the processes in place to communicate through TTY/TDD³, and the accuracy of plan information provided by CSRs. CMS will also assess the understandability of CSRs.

Verify Contact Information

All Sponsors should prepare for this monitoring effort by verifying the accuracy of their 2009 Part C and Part D call center phone numbers in the Health Plan Management System (HPMS) before January 1, 2009. Sponsors will need to update their current and prospective enrollee beneficiary call center phone numbers, pharmacy help desk numbers, and TTY/TDD numbers. Sponsors that do not

¹ For standards see Medicare Marketing Guidelines 2nd Revision July 25, 2006, 164-165, at www.cms.hhs.gov/PrescriptionDrugCovContra/Downloads/FinalMarketingGuidelines.pdf, Solicitation for Applications for New Prescription Drug Plans (PDP) Sponsors, 3.13 A.5, Solicitation for Applications for New Medicare Advantage Prescription Drug Plans (MA-PD) Sponsors, 3.14 A.5, and Medicare Advantage Master Application dated January 17, 2008, 1.13.1(5).

² Medicare Marketing Guidelines 2nd Revision July 25, 2006, 115.

³ Medicare Marketing Guidelines 2nd Revision July 25, 2006, 21.

update their phone numbers now and throughout the year may have inaccurate or incomplete information reported publicly.

Sponsors may verify plan level contacts (i.e., current and prospective enrollee beneficiary numbers and TTY/TDD numbers) through the following path: HPMS Homepage > Plan Bids > Bid Submission > Contract Year 2009 > Manage Plans > Edit Contact Data.

Sponsors may verify contract level contacts (i.e., pharmacy technical help desk numbers) through the following path: HPMS Homepage > Contract Management > Basic Contract Management > Select Contract Number > Contact Data.

Tips for Success

CMS conducted a pilot study of the expanded call center monitoring project and identified several steps sponsors can take to avoid unfavorable results. In addition to the best practices described in an HPMS memo from January 2, 2007 entitled *Best Practices for Addressing the Needs of Non-English Speaking and Limited English Proficient (LEP) Beneficiaries*, sponsors can do the following:

- Ensure CSRs stay on the phone when a foreign-language interpreter joins the call.
- Set IVR systems to default to a live CSR if the caller does not push any buttons or make a verbal selection from an options menu.
- Ensure the phone connection between the CSR and interpreter is clear and free of static.
- Edit TTY/TDD messages that scroll across the screen to ensure there are no typos or inappropriate characters. (Please note that CMS is aware of customary TTY/TDD shorthand.)

If you have any questions about the call center monitoring effort or CMS' call center standards, please email PartDMetrics@cms.hhs.gov and include "Call Center" in the subject line. Thank you.