



ACCOUNTABLE CARE ORGANIZATION SPOTLIGHT NEWSLETTER

March 25, 2021 | ISSUE 6

AT A GLANCE

UPCOMING DEADLINES

- **MIPS EUC Application: Closing March 31st at 8:00 p.m. ET**
- **CMS Web Interface Submission Period: Closing March 31st at 8:00 p.m. ET**

ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS

- **COVID-19 FAQs: Beneficiary Notification Update**

EVENT ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Seeking ACO Speakers for the Spring 2021 VLC Series**

Not for Public Dissemination: The ACO Spotlight Newsletter is a biweekly publication by CMS for ACOs participating in the Shared Savings Program. It is distributed by email only to ACO contacts listed in CMS' ACO-MS. This newsletter is not intended to establish CMS policy and is for informational purposes only for the sole use of the individual(s) to whom it is addressed, and individuals associated with their ACO. The newsletter is not intended for public release. The ACO Spotlight Newsletter is published, produced, and disseminated at U.S. taxpayer expense. If you have received this in error, please notify the sender immediately by emailing SharedSavingsProgram@cms.hhs.gov.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

MIPS Extreme and Uncontrollable Circumstances Policy for the 2020 Performance Period: Application Closing Soon

CMS continues to offer flexibilities to provide relief for clinicians responding to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. CMS is applying the [2020 Merit-based Incentive Payment System \(MIPS\) Automatic Extreme and Uncontrollable Circumstances Policy](#) to all MIPS-eligible clinicians for the 2020 performance period. The MIPS extreme and uncontrollable circumstances (EUC) application for individual MIPS-eligible clinicians, groups, virtual groups, and Alternative Payment Model (APM) Entities is closing on March 31, 2021, at 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time (ET). The application is available on the Quality Payment Program (QPP) [About QPP Exemptions webpage](#). Note that applications received between now and March 31st will not override previously submitted data for individuals, groups, and virtual groups.

APM Entities participating in MIPS APMs can submit an EUC application with some differences from the MIPS EUC policy for individuals, groups, and virtual groups:

- APM Entities are required to request reweighting for all performance categories.
- More than 75 percent of the MIPS-eligible clinicians in the APM Entity must be eligible for reweighting in the Promoting Interoperability performance category.
- **Unlike applications for individuals, groups, and virtual groups, an APM Entity's approved application for performance category weighting will override previously submitted data.**

Note that if an APM Entity does not report for the 2020 performance period (or does not have an approved EUC application), their MIPS-eligible clinicians will receive a negative payment adjustment in the 2022 payment year.

Additional Resources

- [2020 MIPS Extreme and Uncontrollable Circumstances Resources](#) (zip file)
- [Quality Payment Program – COVID-19 Response](#) fact sheet

For more information, visit the [QPP COVID-19 Response webpage](#). If you need additional assistance, contact the QPP Service Center at QPP@cms.hhs.gov or 1-866-288-8292, Monday through Friday between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. ET. Customers who are hearing impaired can dial 711 to be connected to a telecommunications relay service (TRS) Communications Assistant.

CMS Web Interface Submission Period: Closing March 31st

As a reminder, the CMS Web Interface submission period opened on January 4, 2021, at 10:00 a.m. ET and will close on Wednesday, March 31, 2021, at 8:00 p.m. ET. Sign in to the [QPP website](#) to begin submitting data via the CMS Web Interface. During the submission period, you can take the following actions:

- Download your sample data
- Upload your 2020 performance data

To sign in to the QPP website, you need the following information:

- Your Health Care Quality Information Systems (HCQIS) Access Roles and Profile System (HARP) user identifier (ID) and password
- An appropriate user role associated with your organization

CMS will automatically accept the data entered at the end of the submission period. All data entered as of March 31, 2021, at 8:00 p.m. ET will be considered your final submission.

Additional Assistance

The QPP Service Center is available to answer questions related to the CMS Web Interface throughout the submission period. CMS encourages your group, virtual group, or ACO to submit questions early and often during the submission period. Contact the QPP Service Center at QPP@cms.hhs.gov or 1-866-288-8292 (Monday through Friday between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. ET). Please consider calling during non-peak hours (before 10:00 a.m. and after 2:00 p.m. ET) to receive quicker assistance. Customers who are hearing impaired can dial 711 to be connected to a TRS Communications Assistant.

COVID-19 FAQs: Beneficiary Notification Update

CMS will continue to exercise its enforcement discretion to adopt a temporary policy of relaxed enforcement in connection with the deadline for furnishing the standardized written beneficiary notifications required under [425 CFR § 425.312\(a\)](#) as long as it is completed by the end of the applicable performance year. For more information, refer to Section U: Medicare Shared Savings Program - Accountable Care Organizations (ACO) of the recently updated [COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\) on Medicare Fee-for-Service \(FFS\) Billing](#) document.

As a reminder, ACOs can locate the beneficiary notice templates (and other CMS-approved marketing templates) in the [ACO Management System \(ACO-MS\)](#) by navigating to the My ACOs tab. Select the ACO and navigate to the Marketing subtab.

RESOURCES NOW AVAILABLE

PY 2021 Adjusted Historical Benchmark Package: Available March 25th

CMS plans to release the *PY 2021 Adjusted Historical Benchmark Report* packages today, March 25, 2021, to ACOs via the [ACO-MS](#) Data Hub. All ACOs will receive a package for Performance Year (PY) 2021 as a result of changes in the beneficiary assignment methodology specified in [42 CFR part 425, subpart E](#). The *PY 2021 Adjusted Historical Benchmark Report* is based on the ACO's PY 2021 Participant List and the ACO's PY 2021 Assignment Methodology.

The report package will be sent as a zip file and will include the following:

- Cover notice
- *Adjusted Historical Benchmark Report*
- *Annual Assignment List Report (ALR)* (zip file)
- *Annual Assignment Summary Report (ASR)*
- *Annual Aggregate Expenditure/Utilization Report (EXPU Report)*
- *Annual Beneficiary Expenditure Utilization Report (BEUR)* (zip file)
- *Annual Non-Claims Based Payment File (NCBP)* (zip file)

The annual ALR, ASR, EXPU, BEUR, and NCBP will be provided for each of the ACO’s three applicable benchmark years.

CMS encourages ACOs to access the various resources (e.g., videos and webinars) in the Knowledge Library tab in ACO-MS. Resources that are applicable to your ACO will be listed in the cover notices provided with your *Adjusted Historical Benchmark Report* package.

EVENT ANNOUNCEMENTS

Seeking ACO Speakers for the Spring 2021 Virtual Learning Collaborative Series

Starting in May, CMS will host cross-regional Virtual Learning Collaboratives (VLCs) for ACOs participating in the Shared Savings Program. The VLCs will be virtual, enabling ACOs across the country to convene to exchange ideas and collaborate on solutions to shared challenges.

Does your ACO have a success story to share?

CMS is seeking ACO presentations on approaches to data integration, care coordination, provider engagement, telehealth, beneficiary engagement, and social determinants of health.

Interested in presenting?

Express your interest in presenting using the [Spring 2021 Virtual Learning Collaborative Speaker Submissions](#) survey by April 1st. If your proposal is selected, a member of the CMS Learning System team will contact you to discuss a potential presentation.

Save the date!

ACOs are encouraged to register for the one meeting that works best for their team’s schedule. Registration details are forthcoming for the following meeting dates:

DATE	TIME
May 13 th	1:00–3:30 p.m. ET
May 20 th	1:00–3:30 p.m. ET
June 3 rd	1:00–3:30 p.m. ET
June 10 th	1:00–3:30 p.m. ET
June 24 th	1:00–3:30 p.m. ET

For any questions, please email ACOLearningActivities@mathematica-mpr.com.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR ACOs

To help ACOs navigate questions regarding the Shared Savings Program.

ACO Information Center

Click the [ACO-MS](#) Helpdesk icon (located within the ACO-MS banner)

- Program operations and policy inquiries; technical inquiries related to program data and program reports; ACO-MS; and assistance with user access to CMS systems, including password resets
- 1-888-734-6433 (select Option 1) or 1-888-734-6563 (TTY/TDD)

Quality Payment Program Service Center

QPP@cms.hhs.gov

- Inquiries related to MIPS, APMs, MACRA, CAHPS® for ACOs survey, quality measures, quality reporting for 2017 and future years, and CMS Web Interface
- 1-866-288-8292

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