

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
Ambulance Open Door Forum
Moderator: Jill Darling
February 25, 2021
2:00 pm ET

Coordinator: Welcome and thank you for standing by. At this time all participants are in a listen only mode. During the question and answer session of today's call if you would like to ask a question please press star 1 on your phone, record your name and your line will be opened.

Today's conference is being recorded. If you have any objections you may disconnect at this time. I would like to now turn the meeting over to Ms. Jill Darling. You may begin when ready. Thank you.

Jill Darling: Great. Thank you, (Carina). Hello and good morning everyone. I'm Jill Darling in the CMS Office of Communications. And welcome to today's Ambulance Open Door Forum.

Before we get into the agenda today I have one brief announcement. This Open Door Forum is opening to everyone but if you are a member of the press you may listen in but please refrain from asking questions during the Q&A portion of the call. If you have any inquiries please contact CMS at Press@CMS.HHS.gov.

And I would like to hand the call over to our Acting Chair, Susanne Seagrave.

Susanne Seagrave: Thank you so much. I wanted to let you know that unfortunately I will be stepping down as Chair. I'm returning to my previous position in CMS in the Chronic Care Policy Group and so I will be leaving this area. And I've enjoyed working with many of you during my time here.

I'm going to be turning the Chair of this over to my colleague, Marybeth Jason Young, who will lead it going forward. Marybeth, do you want to say a couple of words?

Marybeth Jason Young: Thank you, Susanne. Yes. I will be taking over for Susanne. I will also be in an acting capacity as the Division Director in the Division of Data Analysis and Market Based Pricing. And I will be doing that until a permanent replacement is found. But I'm looking forward to it and I'll be talking to you soon. I'd like to turn it back then to Jill Darling.

Jill Darling: Great. Thanks Marybeth and Susanne. First on the agenda, we have Alexis Lilly who has an update on the Emergency Triage, Treat and Transport, the ET3 model.

Alexis Lilly: Thank you very much, Jill and good afternoon. I'm Alexis Lilly, Model Lead for the Emergency Triage, Treat, and Transport or ET3 model. I'm pleased to announce that the ET3 model launched on January 1, 2021. We've confirmed a total of 185 participants in the model representing 36 states. These participating ambulance suppliers and providers, will have greater flexibility to address the emergency healthcare needs of Medicare fee for service beneficiaries following a 9-1-1 call.

The period of performance for this voluntary payment model is five years. The flexibilities available to model participants include the ability to transport Medicare beneficiaries to an alternative destination such as an urgent care, federally qualified healthcare center, or primary care doctor's office. Participants will also be able to be paid for the initiation and facilitation of treatment in place either on the scene of a 9-1-1 response or via telehealth, with a qualified healthcare partner.

Additionally, there's a medical triage line component of the model, that will be funded through a notice of funding opportunity or NOFO. Eligible applicants to the NOFO include state and local governments, their designees, or other entities that operate or have authority over public safety answering points in geographic regions where participating ambulance suppliers and providers are implementing the treatment in place and transport to an alternative destination intervention.

Through this NOFO CMS will fund recipients to establish or expand medical triage lines integrated with the (PSAP), allowing them to redirect callers with non-emergency conditions, to appropriate care alternatives. A final list of model participants will be posted to the ET3 Web site before the NOFO is released, so that NOFO applicants can confirm their eligibility to apply.

Please subscribe to the ET3 model listserv and visit the ET3 model Web site to stay up to date with all upcoming announcements. Thank you. And back to you, Jill.

Jill Darling: Thank you, Alexis. Next is Amy Gruber, who will go over some of - some COVID-19 FAQs on Medicare Fee For Service Billing.

Amy Gruber: Thank you, Jill. As Jill stated, I am Amy Gruber. I work in the Center for Medicare, Technology, Coding, and Pricing Group, Division of Data Analysis and Market Based Pricing. My division under Susanne's leadership, now under Marybeth's leadership, is responsible for the coverage and payment policy for the Ambulance Fee Schedule. I have two announcements.

The first announcement is about the COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on Medicare Fee For Service Billing. CMS has developed COVID-19

FAQs on Medicare Fee For Service Billing document, which is available on CMS's Coronavirus Disease 2019 website. We have provided a link to the document on today's agenda. You may also access this document on our Ambulances Services Center website.

The easiest way to access our website is CMS.gov, click on Medicare, scroll down the page to the Provider Type, which is on your left hand side, click on Ambulance Services. Or you could Google CMS Ambulance and that would be your first listed website. On our Ambulances Services Center website, this document is listed under Spotlights, Upcoming Events. It's the second bullet.

The Ambulance Services FAQs begins on page 48 of this document. There are FAQs on alternative destinations, patients' signature requirements, vehicle and staffing requirements, and data collection and data reporting requirements for the Medicare Ground Ambulance Data Collection System.

My second announcement is the Medicare Ground Ambulance Data Collection System delay for selected ground ambulance organizations in years one and two. On November 25, 2020 CMS used its statutory authority under Section 1135(b)(5) of the Social Security Act, to modify the data collection and reporting period for ground ambulance organizations that were selected to report in year one, and year two of the Medicare Ground Ambulance Data Collection System.

This revised modification has been issued on page 32 in the COVID-19 Emergency Declaration Blanket Waivers for Health Care Providers document. This document which can also be found on our Ambulances Services Center website. It is the first document listed.

And so under this modification, these ground ambulance organizations can select a new continuous 12-month data collection period. And that data collection period can be aligned with the calendar year or the organization's fiscal year that begins between January 1, 2022 and December 31, 2022, to collect data necessary to complete the Medicare Ground Ambulance Data Collection Instrument, during their selected data collection period, and submit a completed Medicare Ground Ambulance Data Collection Instrument during the data reporting period that corresponds to their selected data collection period.

CMS will not allow an option to continue with the current data collection period because the data collected in 2020 and 2021 during the public health emergency, may not be reflective of typical costs and revenue associated with providing ground ambulance services. CMS modified this data collection and reporting period to increase flexibilities for ground ambulance organizations that would otherwise be required to collect data in 2020 through 2021, so that they can focus on their operations and patient care during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

The list of ground ambulance organizations selected to submit data in year one and year two, can be found on our Ambulances Services Center website under Spotlights, New Medicare Ground Ambulance Data Collection System. The fifth bullet is the list for the year one. And the sixth bullet is the list for the year two selected ground ambulance organizations. CMS will be providing an update in the upcoming months on the notification process. That is how to provide your organization's data collection period and contact information to CMS due to the delay.

Do not submit your required information to your Medicare Administrative Contractor. We would suggest that you check our Ambulances Services Center webpage for updates.

As we stated, in the Calendar Year 2020 Physician Fee Schedule Final Rule which is the citation of 84 FR 62867, a secure web-based data collection system will be available before the start of the data reporting period to allow time for users to register, receive their secure login information, and receive training from CMS on how to use the system. CMS will provide separate instructions on how to access the online Medicare Ground Ambulance Data Collection System. Thank you. Back to you, Jill.

Jill Darling: Thanks, Amy. And thank you, Alexis. (Katrina), will you please open the lines for Q&A?

Coordinator: Yes, thank you. Once again, if you would like to submit a question or a comment, please press star 1 on your phone, record your name and your line will be opened. That is star 1. To withdraw your question you may press star 2. One moment as questions queue up, please.

Once again, if you want to submit a question please press star 1 on your phone, record your name and your line will be opened. Thank you.

Jill Darling: Hi (Katrina), this is Jill. Have any questions come through?

Coordinator: I don't see any questions. Oh, they are popping up right now. One moment.

Jill Darling: Okay.

Coordinator: Our first question comes from Kathy Lester. Your line is now open.

Kathy Lester: Hi. Thanks. This is Kathy Lester and I'm here on behalf of the American Ambulance Association. Amy, I just had a question for you. I know we've been talking about this for a while and it's about the FAQs. You know, we have been working with the MACs individually and with the team in Baltimore, because we understand that while the FAQs are saying there are no changes to current medical necessity policy, and we understand that to mean that transport where a patient is covered because of isolation due to a contagious disease, that that is sufficient to meet medical necessity in and of itself, so long as you have appropriate documentation.

But - and there are some MACs as you know, that recognize this fact and have been clear on that. And our conversations with the folks in Baltimore, also suggests that to be true. However we are encountering other MACs that are indicating that a claim when the basis for medical necessity is isolation because of a contagious disease, is not sufficient to justify the claim under medical necessity.

And so what I'm wondering with the FAQs you just referenced, if CMS can clarify them so that it clearly states that transports are covered if a patient has a communicable disease and must be isolated from the public, or whose medical condition must be protected from public exposure. I think that clarity would be really, really, helpful right now, during the pandemic.

So I'm happy to provide any other background, but hopefully that's something that we can resolve sooner rather than later.

Susanne Seagrave: Hi Kathy. This is Susanne. I appreciate your comment. Can you please send it to the ODF mailbox so that we can log it and, you know, consider it internally?

Kathy Lester: Sure. I'm happy to do that.

Susanne Seagrave: Thank you.

Jill Darling: And this is Jill. That email is on the agenda. It's
AmbulanceODF@CMS.HHS.gov.

Coordinator: Once again, if you would like to submit a question or a comment, please press star 1 on your phone, record your name, and your line will be opened. That is star 1. Thank you. Our next question comes from (Patty Allen). Your line is now open.

(Patty Allen): Thank you. I have one brief question. I had been speaking to Palmetto who is our provider for CMS payments, and we have been - they have not been able to furnish us with a 2021 updated Medicare allowable fee. Do you know where I might be able to locate one for the State of Alabama?

Susanne Seagrave: Is there anybody on the line that's able to address that question?

(Eric): Hi, so this is (Eric) at CMS. Forgive me, I'm not quite sure I understand what your question is. But if you're looking for the Ambulance Fee Schedule rates for the State of, I think you said Arizona, that's...

(Patty Allen): Alabama.

(Eric): Alabama. Sorry. Completely different state. That can be found on the CMS website. We have a public use file. A simple Google search for Ambulance Fee Schedule Public Use File CMS will take you there probably. I can try to pull up real quick, the actual...

(Patty Allen): My question is...

(Eric): ...Website.

(Patty Allen): ...that we did - I'm sorry. We did go to that and apparently as of this year it says that all the contract carriers within the state of Alabama are all under carrier number 01112 and it depends on your locality. But then another thing says there is no localities as of 2021. So it was a little confusing because even Palmetto GBA couldn't locate it.

(Eric): Okay, yes. I don't have an explanation for that. Let's see. There's the 2021 file. Let me offer you my email address so that I can...

(Patty Allen): Okay.

(Eric): ...get back to you via email.

Jill Darling: (Eric) - hi (Eric)...

(Eric): Yes?

Jill Darling: ...this is Jill. We can - ma'am, if you don't mind sending it into the Ambulance ODF inbox.

(Patty Allen): Okay. I will do that.

Jill Darling: Thank you.

(Patty Allen): Thank you.

Coordinator: Okay. Our next question comes from (Diana Huffman). Your line is now open.

(Diana Huffman): Hi there. Everybody keeps asking questions on these forums and a lot of them are questions that several of us have. And so if you guys are asking us to email you and then you're responding to that person emailing, is there somewhere that we all can see these answers?

Jill Darling: Yes. So this is Jill. So after the Open Door Forum we receive a transcript and also I put together a Q&A document. So I get together with the speakers after the call to get the answers. And then we post the transcript, the audio and the Q&A document on our podcast and transcript Web page. And that's also - you can Google that, CMS podcast and transcripts and you have to scroll down. It's a pretty large page with all of our Open Door Forums and COVID-related calls.

And it will be listed under Ambulance. So just give us a couple of weeks so we can get the answers and get it posted.

(Diana Huffman): Okay. And how long does that stay live for?

Jill Darling: Quite some time. There are calls on there that have been up since - for like four years.

(Diana Huffman): Awesome. Thank you.

Jill Darling: So - we have - yes, no problem.

Coordinator: Once again, if you would like to submit a question or a comment please press star 1 on your phone, record your name and your line will be opened. At this time there are no further questions in queue.

Jill Darling: All right. well thank you everyone. We always appreciate questions and comments. And please feel free to send in questions and comments into the Ambulance ODF email. Again, it's AmbulanceODF@CMS.HHS.gov. And we look forward to talking to you on our next Ambulance call. Thanks everyone.

Coordinator: Thank you all for your participation. This concludes our conference. You may disconnect. Speakers, remain on the line, please. Thank you.

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