

CMS Unique ID Job Aid for Directors

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Purpose

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Unique ID system is available to State Health Insurance Assistance Programs (SHIPs) and Senior Medicare Patrol programs (SMPs)

through a collaboration between the Administration for Community Living (ACL) and CMS. The system is designed to remove barriers to researching beneficiaries' complex Medicare issues. CMS Unique IDs are used by active, approved, screened, and trained SHIP and SMP team members as a form of verification to provide access to certain beneficiary information when assisting a Medicare beneficiary.

CMS Unique ID holders can speak to 1-800-Medicare Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) by calling **1-888-647-6701**, the phone number designated by CMS for SHIP and SMP CMS Unique ID holders. Without a CMS Unique ID and the use of this designated phone number, SMP and SHIP team members could not talk with 1-800-Medicare CSRs on behalf of beneficiaries regarding their services, claims, or providers unless the beneficiary initiated the call in the presence of the SMP or SHIP team member. The CMS Unique ID can also be used for speaking with representatives from Medicare Advantage and Part D plans who have agreed to participate in the CMS Unique ID program and the Benefits Coordination & Recovery Center (BCRC) for CMS.

Who is Eligible for a CMS Unique ID?

Because CMS Unique IDs are intended for resolving *complex* beneficiary cases, they are not needed by every team member. A CMS Unique ID can be approved for active, properly screened and trained SMP and SHIP team members who have completed an annual confidentiality agreement and have received annual privacy training.

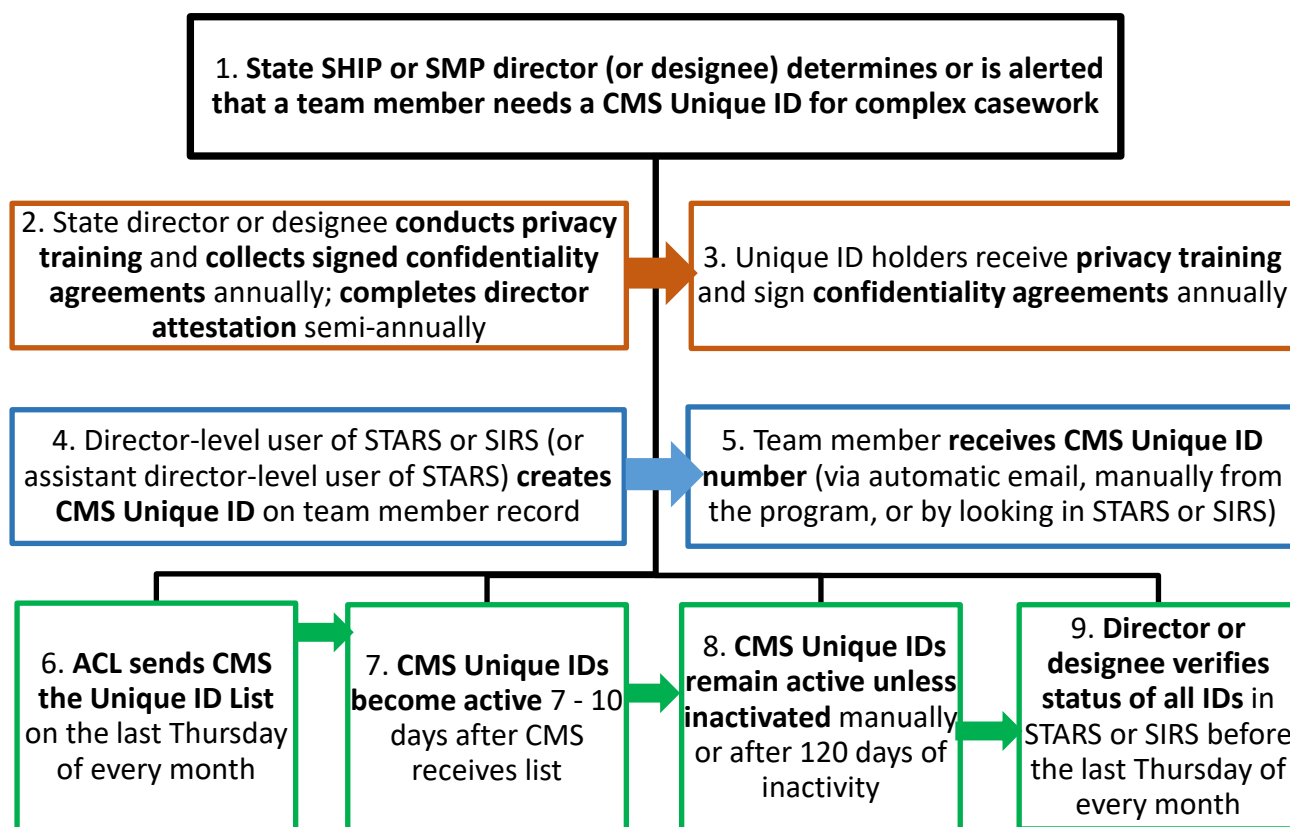
Definition of Active, Properly Screened and Trained Team Member

To be considered properly screened and trained, team members must have completed the screening and training required by their state program, be certified by their state program, and have signed an agreement or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with their local agency. To be considered active, properly trained and state-certified team members must be registered with their SMP or SHIP program and must have provided counseling, information, or assistance related to Medicare or other health insurance in the 12-month reporting period.

CMS Unique ID Management

CMS Unique IDs are created automatically by ACL's SHIP and SMP data systems. The SHIP data system is called STARS (SHIP Tracking And Reporting System) and the SMP data system is called SIRS (SMP Information and Reporting System). The fields for managing CMS Unique IDs are on the individual team member records in STARS and SIRS, visible only to director roles (including the STARS assistant director role). Team members co-trained in both SHIP and SMP work should only be given **one** CMS Unique ID. Therefore, co-trained team members who already have a CMS Unique ID in STARS should not be given another one generated by SIRS, and vice versa. **Importantly, it is each director's responsibility to work with their state program counterpart (if applicable) to cross-reference CMS UID users (names/organizations only) to confirm that each user, even if they are a co-trained SHIP/SMP team member, has only been assigned one CMS Unique ID.**

Process Overview



STARS and SIRS Processes

Director-level users of STARS and SIRS and assistant director-level users of STARS can create and view CMS Unique IDs for other users in the data system. Unless you are creating a team member in the data system for the first time, use the Search menu to find individual team member records, open them, and edit the CMS Unique ID fields. Note: Directors are given a CMS Unique ID when their account is created by [Booz Allen Hamilton](#). Only Booz Allen Hamilton and ACL can edit director-level team member records.

Find Your Saved Team Members

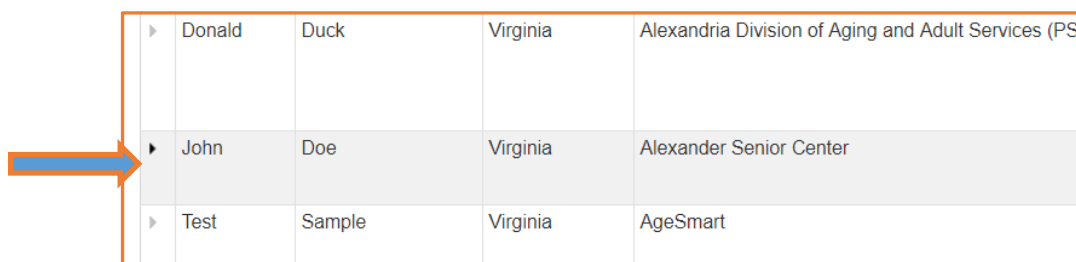
If you are assigning or reactivating CMS Unique IDs for team members who are already created and saved, use the Search menu to find and open their team member record.

Search Tips

- **A Standard Search** is effective for finding team members and immediately accessing and updating their forms.
- **An Advanced Search** is also effective, but more complex to create.
- Access “Shared Searches” to find Advanced Searches created and shared by ACL, the SMP or SHIP Center, or others with your same user role.

Open the Saved Team Member Record

When you find your desired team member, click within their row of information to open their team member record. In this example, our mouse hovered over John Doe's row, and it became gray. Upon clicking, John Doe's team member record will open for review or editing.



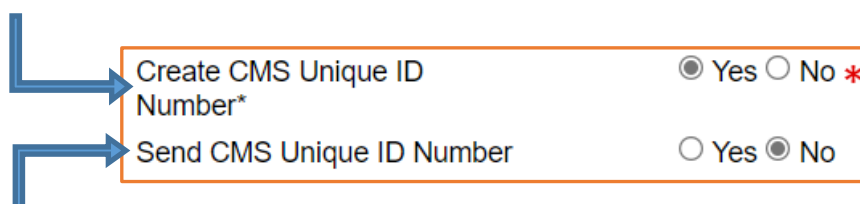
▶ Donald	Duck	Virginia	Alexandria Division of Aging and Adult Services (PS
▶ John	Doe	Virginia	Alexander Senior Center
▶ Test	Sample	Virginia	AgeSmart

Assign a CMS Unique ID

When entering or editing a new team member in SIRS or STARS, complete the CMS Unique ID fields as follows.

1. **Create CMS Unique ID Number.** The default answer to *Create CMS Unique ID Number* is "No." When creating or updating a team member record, director or assistant director users should select "Yes" if the team member is to be given a CMS Unique ID.

Note: The Create CMS Unique ID Number field will remain as "Yes" after saving.



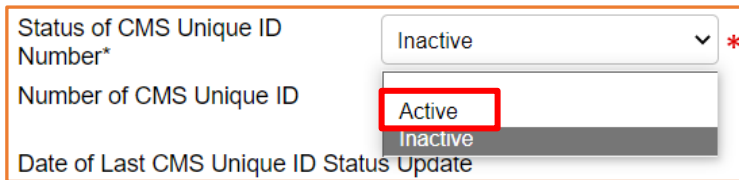
Create CMS Unique ID Number* ☒ Yes ☐ No *

Send CMS Unique ID Number ☐ Yes ☒ No

- To later revoke a team member's CMS Unique ID, select "No."

2. **Send CMS Unique ID Number.** "Sending" means to email the team member their CMS Unique ID from the data system. It is not a required field. Select "Yes" to have the system send the team member their CMS Unique ID in an email. This is only possible if there is an accurate email address entered for the team member.
 - a. **Note:** This *Send CMS Unique ID Number* field will always revert to "No" after saving, which allows you to re-send automatic emails as many times as needed. To re-send the ID in an email, open a saved team member record, select "Yes" for the *Send CMS Unique ID Number* field, and save.
 - b. Sending address: DoNotReplyACLSys@bah.com.
 - c. Receiving or providing CMS Unique IDs manually: The STARS and SIRS data systems allow users to access the CMS Unique IDs in different ways. For example, team members can see their own CMS Unique ID on their team member record (Tracking Inbox menu). STARS and SIRS director-level users and STARS assistant director-level users can use a configuration report to see all CMS Unique IDs.

3. **Status of CMS Unique ID Number.** This required field reads “Inactive” by default. If this team member will be assigned a CMS Unique ID, or to reactivate a CMS Unique ID, click the drop-down arrow and select “Active.”



The screenshot shows a form with three fields: 'Status of CMS Unique ID Number*', 'Number of CMS Unique ID', and 'Date of Last CMS Unique ID Status Update'. The 'Status' dropdown menu is open, showing 'Inactive' as the selected option and 'Active' as an available option, which is highlighted with a red box.

- a. Note: CMS Unique IDs can be inactivated by changing the status to “Inactive.” You will find more details about how system inactivation rules affect CMS Unique IDs later in this job aid under [Team Member Inactivity and CMS Unique ID Status](#).
4. **Number of CMS Unique ID.** After saving, a CMS Unique ID number will auto-generate. It will only be visible to that team member, director-level users, and, in STARS, assistant director-level users. (It will not be visible to any other user roles with the ability to view team member forms in the data system.)

Number of CMS Unique ID *Visible only to ID user, directors, and STARS assistant directors*

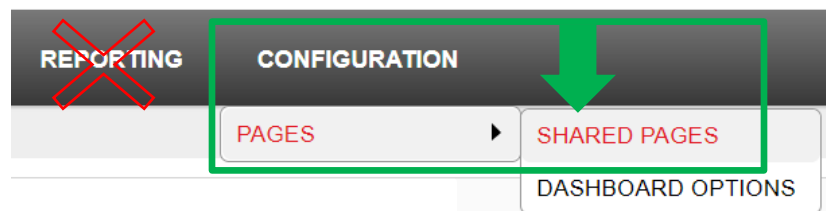
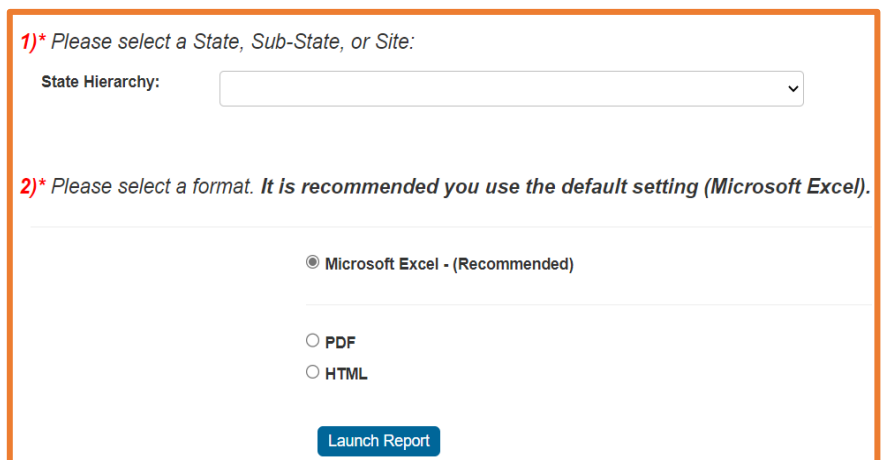
- Reminder: director and assistant director users can also see all team member CMS Unique ID numbers in a configured report (see the Configuration menu).

CMS Unique IDs Report

The *CMS Unique IDs Report – State*, is only visible to director users of STARS and SIRS and assistant director users of STARS. ACL will use a national version of this report to provide the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) with a list of users who have active CMS Unique IDs in the system.

To generate a report, go to the *Configuration* menu, select *Pages*, select *Shared Pages*, and select CMS Unique IDs Report.

Set the scope of your report by selecting your State, a Sub-State, or a Site from your State Hierarchy. If you select the state and your state has sites, you will be asked if you would like to include sites. Click “Yes” to include all data for the state, click “No” to only show data for team members assigned to the state and not a site.

The screenshot shows the report generation form with two instructions:

1)* Please select a State, Sub-State, or Site:

State Hierarchy: [dropdown menu]

2)* Please select a format. It is recommended you use the default setting (Microsoft Excel).

Format options:

● Microsoft Excel - (Recommended)

○ PDF

○ HTML

A 'Launch Report' button is at the bottom.

Choose your report format. Microsoft Excel is the default choice. HTML opens the report within the data system.

The resulting report for both SMPs and SHIPs looks like this sample for the SIRS test site of Marshall Islands, which uses fake names and numbers:

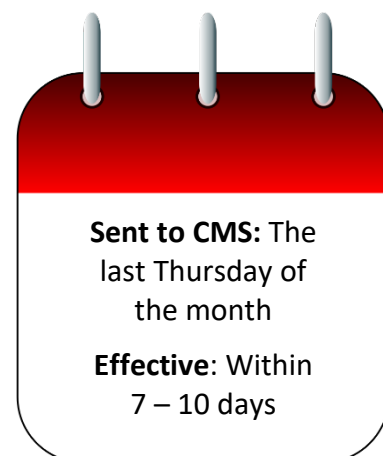
SMP CMS Unique IDs Report - State Marshall Islands							
Report run on: 06/08/2023 at 00:59:49 EDT							
First Name:	Last Name:	Organization:	State:	County:	Status:	CMS Unique ID:	Date of Last CMS Unique ID Status Update:
Amy	Apple	Marshall Islands	Iowa	Black Hawk	Inactive	19800964	11/10/2022
Bobby	Black	Marshall Islands	Iowa	Black Hawk	Inactive	19141585	11/10/2022
Bonnie	Blue	Marshall Islands	Iowa		Inactive	19395767	12/20/2022
Betty	Blue	Marshall Islands	Iowa	Black Hawk	Inactive	19253290	12/20/2022

CMS Unique ID Effective Dates

ACL sends CMS an updated CMS Unique ID list on the last Thursday of every month. It takes CMS seven to ten (7 – 10) days to process the monthly CMS Unique ID list from ACL. CMS Unique IDs that are active in SIRS or STARS before the last Thursday of the month will be usable within the following 7 - 10 days. CMS Unique IDs approved on or after the last Thursday of the month will be usable the second month following their approval.

Considerations

- ✓ An inactivated (i.e. revoked) CMS Unique ID will remain usable until the next ACL-generated CMS Unique ID list is processed by CMS.
 - Inactivation of IDs follows the same schedule as newly activated IDs.
 - Therefore, any CMS Unique IDs that have been inactivated will *not be* on the ACL-generated list sent to CMS.
 - Consequently, they will *no longer be usable* after CMS processes the new list.
- ✓ CMS Unique IDs that become inactivated on or after the last Thursday of the month will remain usable until the second month following inactivation.
- ✓ If a CMS Unique ID is inactivated during a month and is reactivated *before* ACL generates the monthly list for CMS, there will be no interruption in a team member's ability to use their CMS Unique ID.



120 Days of Inactivity and CMS Unique ID Status

The SIRS and STARS data systems have 120-day inactivity rules that will automatically inactivate a team member's CMS Unique ID when inactivity criteria apply. Affected team members will receive an automatic email 7 days prior to the potential inactivation of their CMS Unique ID. Directors will be copied on those emails.

- In STARS, the CMS Unique ID status is dependent on the Beneficiary Contact Forms and Beneficiary Additional Sessions forms, regardless of whether the team member

has logged in or has conducted other types of SHIP work.

- The CMS Unique ID will automatically become inactive after 120 days if the team member has no beneficiary contacts for 120 days – i.e. that team member's name does not appear in the *Session Conducted By* fields on any Beneficiary Contact forms or Beneficiary Additional Session forms for 120 days.
- In SIRS, the CMS Unique ID status is dependent on complex interactions, regardless of whether the team member has logged in or has conducted other types of SMP work.
 - The CMS Unique ID will automatically become inactive after 120 days if the team member has no complex interactions for 120 days – i.e., that team member's name does not appear in the *Session Conducted By* field for any complex interactions for 120 days.

Sample CMS Unique ID inactivation email alerts

The following automatic email will be sent to STARS and SIRS team members 7 days prior to the potential inactivation of their CMS Unique ID. The director-level user/s for their state or territory will be copied on the email.

Email text

Subject Line: CMS Unique ID Expires Soon

"Hello [name]!"

This is a reminder that your CMS Unique ID for contacting 1-800-Medicare or participating Medicare plans to resolve complex beneficiary issues will be inactivated in 7 days if a record is not associated with your profile.

Effective Date: The U.S. Administration for Community Living (ACL) will send this number to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) on the last Thursday of this month. CMS then needs 7 – 10 days to process this number before it will be usable. Note: If this email is dated on or after the last Thursday of this month, your ID will be sent to CMS the last Thursday of next month.

If you have any questions about the ID, how to use your ID, or the effective date, please contact your supervisor or refer to the CMS Unique ID Job Aid.

[*STARS users see this sentence*: If you have STARS functionality questions, refer to the STARS manual or contact the Booz Allen STARS Help Desk. *SIRS users see this sentence*: If you have SIRS functionality questions, refer to the SIRS Job Aids or contact the Booz Allen SIRS Help Desk.]

Have a great day!"

Important Tip for Directors

The email alerts will be sent after 113 days of inactivity, and the CMS Unique ID will not be automatically inactivated until day 120. If you wish to prevent automatic inactivation, resave their team member form, ensuring the Unique ID status reads active and the date of CMS Unique ID update is renewed. Unique IDs that have already been automatically inactivated must be manually reactivated by director-level users. There is no automatic *reactivation* process. CMS Unique IDs can only be reactivated for team members with an Active program status. If their program status is inactive, you will not be able to reactivate their Unique ID.

Director Deadlines

There are monthly, semi-annual, and annual deadlines regarding the CMS Unique IDs.

Monthly CMS Unique ID Status Verification

Shortly before the last Thursday of every month, directors should ensure the list of CMS Unique IDs that ACL will send to CMS for their program is accurate. An accurate list means that all team members with an “Active” CMS Unique ID status have met the program criteria. IDs can become inactivated due to system inactivity and some team members may have an “Inactive” status that should be manually changed to “Active.” Changing the CMS Unique ID status within SIRS or STARS is instant upon saving; however, CMS will not recognize the reactivated Unique ID until they receive the updated list from ACL.

Steps:

1. Review your internal program records about team members who should have CMS Unique IDs.
2. Use the CMS Unique ID report in SIRS or STARS to review the team members who have active and inactive CMS Unique IDs in the data system.
3. Make changes as needed by opening, editing, and resaving team member records, as needed:
 - a. If they should have an active CMS Unique ID, ensure their Unique ID status is set to “Active” in SIRS or STARS.
 - b. If their CMS Unique ID should be revoked, set the Unique ID status to “Inactive” in SIRS or STARS.
4. Once saved, the “Date of Last CMS Unique ID Status Update” will automatically fill with the current date.

Semi-Annual Director Attestation

Signed director attestation forms are due to ACL on May 1 and Oct 1 every year. Signing and submitting this form confirms for ACL and CMS that all team members with CMS Unique IDs have a signed and current confidentiality form on file and have received annual privacy training.

- A blank copy of this form is in the SMP and SHIP Resource libraries.
- Send the completed attestation form to ACL at ohic@acl.hhs.gov.

Annual Confidentiality Agreements

Annually, each team member who is given a CMS Unique ID must sign the *Confidentiality Agreement for Receipt of Unique ID* form. Team members with CMS Unique IDs should follow the procedures provided to them at the local level for signing and submitting confidentiality agreements.

- A blank copy of this form is in the SMP and SHIP Resource libraries.

- SMP and SHIP directors must keep these signed forms on file. They are not submitted to ACL or CMS.

Annual Privacy Training

It is the responsibility of SMP and SHIP directors to ensure that all team members with CMS Unique IDs are provided with privacy training annually. One option is to use the Centers self-paced online Privacy and Confidentiality course, PowerPoint template, or webinar recording (see [Resources](#)).

CMS Unique ID User Instructions

This section of the job aid explains how a team member who has been given a CMS Unique ID can find their number in SIRS or STARS and how to use the number when contacting Medicare or a participating Medicare plan. As a reminder, team members may also receive their CMS Unique ID in an automatic email from STARS or SIRS or from their supervisor or other leader in their SHIP or SMP program.

Finding Your CMS Unique ID and Status in SIRS or STARS

If you are a SHIP team member who logs into STARS or an SMP team member who logs into SIRS, you can use the system to see your CMS Unique ID and your Unique ID Status.

1. Log into SIRS or STARS.
2. Open the *Tracking Inbox* menu.
 - a. In SIRS, select "Team Member"
 - b. In STARS, select "SHIP Team Member."
3. Find your name in the tracking inbox.
 - a. Depending on your user role, you may see the names of other team members or you may see only your own name.
 - b. Rely on your SIRS job aids (SMPs) or the STARS manual (SHIPs) for detailed instructions about navigating the data system.
4. Click on the row containing your name to see the details about you.
5. Scroll down the page to find your status and your number:

Status of CMS Unique ID Number*	Active	▼ *
Number of CMS Unique ID	19584924	
Date Of Last CMS Unique ID Status Update	06/06/2023	

**Sample: Is
Not a Real ID**

When to use your CMS Unique ID

Before using your CMS Unique ID, you must have written or verbal authorization from the beneficiary or their representative to discuss the beneficiary's plan issues or concerns.

Here are some examples of reasons team members might use their CMS Unique ID:

- Assisting beneficiaries with researching denied claims or claims errors

- Researching possibly inaccurate information on Medicare Summary Notices (MSNs) or Explanations of Benefits (EOBs)
- Checking on premiums for Part C or Part D plans
- Checking on the status of the beneficiary's enrollment
- Checking on Durable Medical Equipment, Prosthetics, Orthotics, and Supplies (DMEPOS) Competitive Bidding information
- Assisting with a beneficiary's complex case
 - Collecting claim numbers, dates of service, and provider information.
- Reporting a compromised Medicare number
 - Note: Only the beneficiary can request a *new* Medicare number, not SMPs or SHIPs. Beneficiaries must contact Medicare on their own behalf to request a new number if their current number is compromised.
- Unique ID holders can request Medicare Plan Finder assistance in real time. Use the designated phone number with your CMS Unique ID if you have questions about what you are seeing in the plan finder.

There are some limitations to the CMS Unique ID. It *cannot* provide:

- Access to advanced or specialized customer service representatives (CSRs).
 - The 1-800-Medicare CSRs who answer calls made via the CMS Unique ID are the same CSRs who answer other calls to 1-800-Medicare.
- 1-800-Medicare CSRs will not be able to answer all questions about Medicare Advantage or Part D plans.
 - It is best to contact plans directly. Some do and some do not participate in the CMS Unique ID program. See the latest list in the SMP and SHIP resource libraries.
- Medicare reconsideration and appeals.
 - All appeal requests must be submitted in writing. Appeal rights and where to send the reconsideration request are on the back of the MSN.
- Medicare Secondary Payer information.
 - CSRs can only provide status of the beneficiary's record. If changes are required or updates needed, the caller should contact the Medicare Secondary Payer or Benefits Coordination & Recovery Center (BCRC) for specific resolution.
 - Note: If an attorney requires the "Payment Summary" form for settlements, these are available on www.medicare.gov.
- Retroactive enrollments or disenrollments.
 - CSRs are only permitted to perform prospective enrollments. If the caller requires a retroactive enrollment, the CSR will transfer the caller to an Internal Support Group CSR to file a complaint. Retroactive enrollments are handled by the CMS Regional Office staff.
- A new Medicare number for beneficiaries whose number is compromised.
 - Reminder: beneficiaries must call Medicare on their own behalf to request a new number.

Calling Medicare with your CMS Unique ID

To use your CMS Unique ID with Medicare, follow these steps:

A. Call 1-888-647-6701. An automated voice will greet you and ask you to enter your number.

- **Note:** Using this phone number in conjunction with your CMS Unique ID gives you a priority position in 1-800-Medicare's queue of callers. When call volumes are high, such as during Medicare's fall Open Enrollment Period (OEP), wait times might still apply.

Call 1-888-647-6701

Important: This dedicated phone number for calling Medicare is only for SHIP and SMP team members with CMS Unique IDs. It is not to be shared with the public.

B. Enter your CMS Unique ID number. If you enter your CMS Unique ID incorrectly or enter an invalid CMS Unique ID, you will hear the regular menu of options presented to all callers who call 1-800-MEDICARE. If you enter your number correctly, you will be able to select from the following menu options:

- If you have General Questions, press 1
- If you have questions about a doctor's service or hospital visit, press 2
- If you have a question about medical supplies, press 3

NOTE: CMS says the efficiency in this system relies on you selecting the appropriate option from this menu. It is designed to be very short and to-the-point. It is purposely not as long and descriptive as the menus for accessing CSRs through the public 1-800-MEDICARE number, as CMS assumes SHIP and SMP team members can use the shorthand menus described above. If you do not choose the appropriate menu option, you will not see increased efficiency from the system.

C. Be ready to provide your CMS Unique ID number to the Customer Service

Representative (CSR) who answers and have pertinent beneficiary information ready. In order to verify that the CSR is speaking about the correct beneficiary, CMS says the CSR will request from the CMS Unique ID user at least four of the following pieces of information:

- Beneficiary name as it appears on the Medicare card
- Medicare number
- Medicare Part A and/or Part B effective dates
- Beneficiary date of birth
- Beneficiary address

D. Be ready to answer claims-related questions. Medicare CSRs will commonly ask you if there is a claim involved that has already been processed and/or whether you recognize the provider or supplier listed on the Medicare Summary Notice (MSN).

Calling others with your CMS Unique ID

Participating Medicare Plans

Annually, CMS provides a list of Medicare Advantage and Part D prescription drug plans that participate in the CMS Unique ID program. When it becomes available from CMS each year, ACL sends the list to the SHIP director listserv and the SMP director listserv. This list is also available in the SMP and SHIP resource libraries. The list is based on responses from plans to CMS. The list includes the following fields:

- Plan contract number (ID)
- Plan type
- Contract name
- State (service area(s))
- Plan Call Center number for current members (where there is no number, one was not provided)
- Plan Call Center number for prospective members (where there is no number, one was not provided)

Team members with a valid and current CMS Unique ID should be able to access these plans using their CMS Unique ID number to help support beneficiaries they serve, as needed. Participating plans will have access to the most current list of CMS Unique IDs through CMS' Health Plan Management System (HPMS), Complaint Tracking Module (CTM).

Calling the Benefits Coordination & Recovery Center (BCRC)

The number SMPs and SHIPs should use to call the BCRC is **1-855-798-2627**.

The Benefits Coordination & Recovery Center (BCRC) was formerly known as the Coordination of Benefits Contractor (COBC). It consolidates the activities that support the collection, management, and reporting of other insurance coverage for Medicare beneficiaries. The purpose of the program is to identify the health benefits available to a Medicare beneficiary and to coordinate the payment process to prevent mistaken Medicare payment. The BCRC does not process claims or claim-specific inquiries. The Medicare Administrative Contractors, (MACs), intermediaries, and carriers are responsible for processing claims submitted for primary or secondary payment and resolving situations where a provider receives a mistaken payment of Medicare benefits.

When to contact the BCRC:

- To report employment changes, or any other insurance coverage information
- To report a liability, auto/no-fault, or workers' compensation case
- To ask a general Medicare Secondary Payer question
- To ask a question regarding the Medicare Secondary Payer letters and questionnaires

Reporting CMS Unique ID Problems

CMS is very interested in ensuring the CMS Unique IDs are working correctly. If you encounter problems using your Unique ID, report the issue using the process outlined in the CMS Unique ID Complaint Form in the Resource Library.

Resources

All CMS Unique ID resources are housed in the password-protected areas of the SMP Center and SHIP Center websites: www.smpresource.org and www.shiphelp.org (also known as www.shiptacenter.org), respectively. Examples of types of CMS Unique ID resources include:

- Director attestation form
- Confidentiality agreement form
- CMS Unique ID Complaint Form
- CMS Unique ID training webinar archives
- Privacy training – PowerPoint template, recorded webinar, and self-paced online course
- CMS Unique ID job aids
- List of participating plans
- 1-800-Medicare CSR capabilities

Technical Assistance

- **Booz Allen Hamilton (a.k.a. “Booz Allen”) Help Desk:**
 - Call: 703-377-4424
 - Email: For STARS technical assistance, email boozallenstarshelpdesk@bah.com, and for SIRS technical assistance, email boozallensirshelpdesk@bah.com.
- **SMP Resource Center**
 - **SIRS Support.** The SMP Resource Center provides webinar training, technical assistance, and written job aids on SIRS. Contact the SMP Resource Center at SIRS@smpresource.org.
 - **Resource Library Support.** For assistance finding Unique ID forms and training resources in the password-protected area of the SMP Resource Center’s website, www.smpresource.org, contact them at 877-808-2468 or info@smpresource.org.
- **SHIP Technical Assistance Center (SHIP TA Center):**
 - **STARS Support.** The SHIP TA Center provides webinar training, technical assistance, and a STARS manual. Contact the SHIP TA Center at stars@shiptacenter.org or 877-839-2675.
 - **Resource Library Support.** For assistance finding Unique ID forms and training resources in the password-protected area of the SHIP TA Center’s website, www.shiphelp.org, contact them at 877-839-2675 or info@shiptacenter.org.
- **Administration for Community Living (ACL):** If you have questions for ACL about the administration of the CMS Unique ID system, email ohic@acl.hhs.gov.

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