Administration for Community Living Office of Healthcare Information and Counseling

Managing Through COVID-19 Work grouP - September 2020

Sample Messaging to the Public and Volunteers

Preparing for Remote Medicare Open Enrollment Toolkit

A picture containing drawing

Description automatically generated A close up of a sign

Description automatically generated A picture containing drawing, food

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## Introduction

Here are sample scripts to communicate the ways your program is working with beneficiaries, caregivers, and/or volunteers during the COVID-19 pandemic. This information can be shared in a variety of mediums, including via email, in letters that accompany pre-appointment forms, in the media, over the phone, or at the beginning of events.

# General Script for Communicating with the Public

We are experiencing a time in history in which people and organizations have had to adjust and adapt to a rapidly changing environment. This includes our program. The ways in which we interact with people and deliver resources and services has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, but we remain available. We know this is particularly important during the fall Medicare Open Enrollment period, which occurs from October 15 – December 7 each year.

We have developed a system to provide safe, creative, and socially distanced ways to continue serving you during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, we are [insert text that explains your program’s approach, such as moving to all virtual service delivery, in-person services with safety measures in place on-site, or a hybrid approach].

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Tips for using the above script, including possible additions:

* **Use the flier that was developed as part of this Preparing for Remote Medicare Open Enrollment Toolkit in your mailings and as part of your outreach materials**
* **The images of masked and socially distanced beneficiaries/caregivers and ACL grantee program staff/volunteers can be excerpted and added to your program web pages or other media. They will visually convey your program’s safety precautions.**

# Sample Script for Communicating with Volunteers

Start with the text in the script for the public, then add volunteer-specific text, such as:

Our goal is to empower our volunteers to continue serving during the Medicare Open Enrollment Period. You are invaluable to our program and to the people we serve! We also know the importance of volunteering as a way to make a difference while forming meaningful community connections.

We are providing new tools, training, and support so that you can connect with beneficiaries and caregivers safely. [Insert details about the tools, training, and support your program is offering.] In these ways, we empower you to serve beneficiaries and caregivers confidently and comfortably during a time when they – and you -- may be uneasy and worried about exposure to COVID-19. Through our modified service delivery system, you can keep beneficiaries and caregivers comfortable and informed while also protecting them and yourself from unwanted exposure.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Tips for using the above script, including possible additions:

* ACL grantees should be familiar with COVID-19-related guidelines at the federal, state, and local levels.
  + See the Federal COVID-19 Guidance resource and the Event Planning Decision Tree resource that are part of **this Preparing for Remote Medicare Open Enrollment Toolkit.**
* Decisions about community measures will be made by local and state officials in consultation with federal officials, as appropriate.
* **Communicate the rules for your agency with your volunteers.**
  + **If in-person events are occurring in your locale, remind volunteers that your program has** the right to cancel any activity if the venue or participants are not in compliance with the applicable rules.
  + Explain the processes you will use to make these decisions and how they will be both implemented and communicated.
  + Review the other resources that are part of this **Preparing for Remote Medicare Open Enrollment Toolkit to provide technology training, support, and tools for volunteers working from home.**

# Script for Beneficiary Outreach Letter or Publication

This sample text that follows is intended to:

* Be used for outreach to beneficiaries.
* Be used to help beneficiaries prepare for the telephonic/virtual Open Enrollment Period [OEP] experience.
* Provide reassurance that beneficiaries are going to have the same quality experience.
* Provide reassurance that counselors/volunteers are experienced and trained.
* Detail basic OEP information and services available through counseling.

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Medicare Counseling Appointments Available by Phone or Virtual Platform

Thousands of area residents get their Medicare questions answered by certified Medicare counselors working with the [enter program name/info].

[Enter program name/info] is committed to continuing to provide Medicare counseling services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Consumers can schedule telephone-based or virtual appointments by calling [enter contact information].

Certified Medicare counselors provide objective, unbiased information, answer general Medicare questions, help people understand available insurance options, and help them learn whether they qualify for income-related benefits. Locally, [enter program name] is managed by [enter agency name], which has offices in [enter office location], serving [enter geographical coverage area].

To make a Medicare counseling appointment, contact [enter contact info].

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### Tips for using the above letter:

* Send out the document via outreach methods [mail, email, newsletter, website, post in common areas of the community.]
* Update the document with agency’s logo, letterhead, and contact information, as applicable.
* Include informational documents, such as the pre-enrollment form or instructions that inform beneficiaries about virtual counseling experiences [Zoom/Skype/Teams/etc.].