

Eli's Hospice Insider

Hospice News: Your Patients Will Start Receiving New Medicare Cards Next Month

Medicare has been talking about switching beneficiaries to the new Social Security Number-free cards for a good long while, and now the Medicare Beneficiary Identifier switchover date is nearly upon you.

The **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services** will begin to mail the new MBI Medicare cards in April 2018. There are seven "waves" of mailings that will take place per a schedule based largely on geographic location, CMS says. The mailings are scheduled for a window of at least four months.

Do this: "Medicare providers should ask their Medicare patients to contact their local SSA office to ensure their address is current," CMS urges. You can also double-check the address you have on file for the patient against the address you get in electronic eligibility transaction responses, CMS notes. "This may require coordination between your billing and office staff. Give your patients a tear-off sheet in English or Spanish to remind them to check their addresses," the agency recommends.

You will get a bit of a breather during the transition period, which ends in December 2019. "Beginning in October 2018, through the transition period, when providers submit a claim using a patient's valid and active Health Insurance Claim Number (HICN), CMS will return both the HICN and the MBI on every remittance advice," the agency says.

Why should you care about the new MBI cards right away, if the transition period lasts another 21 months? You must be "ready for people who are new to Medicare in April 2018 and after, because they'll only get a card with the MBI," CMS stresses on its website.

Resources: Check out where your state or territory falls in the mailing schedule at www.cms.gov/Medicare/New-Medicare-Card/NMC-Mailing-Strategy.pdf. Find more info, including links to the patient information sheets, at www.cms.gov/Medicare/New-Medicare-Card/Providers/Providers.html.