

Eli's Hospice Insider

Hospice Notes: Medicare Ramps Up Beneficiary Card Transition

Medicare won't start sending out its new beneficiary cards until next April, but it's already preparing beneficiaries - and the providers serving them - for the change.

"The goal of the initiative to remove Social Security numbers from Medicare cards is to help prevent fraud, combat identity theft, and safeguard taxpayer dollars," **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services** Administrator **Seema Verma** says in a release.

Beneficiaries, providers, and others can see the new card design at www.cms.gov/newcard or in the new 2018 "Medicare & You" handbook that CMS recently mailed out.

Don't be surprised if you get questions from your patients when the cards start going out. "CMS has assigned all people with Medicare benefits a new, unique Medicare number, which contains a combination of numbers and uppercase letters," the agency explains in the release. "People with Medicare will receive a new Medicare card in the mail, and will be instructed to safely and securely destroy their current Medicare card and keep their new Medicare number confidential. Issuance of the new number will not change benefits that people with Medicare receive."

CMS assures providers that they will have "secure look-up tools that will allow quick access to the new Medicare numbers when needed." And a 21-month transition period will allow doctors, healthcare providers, and suppliers to use either current SSN-based Medicare Numbers or the new, unique Medicare numbers, "to ease the transition."

Bottom line: CMS is "working with healthcare providers to answer their questions and ensure that they have the information they need to make a successful transition to the new Medicare number," the agency emphasizes.