

## 1-800 Medicare/SHIP Directions for Use

CMS has begun a broad implementation of a system designed to enhance the interaction of SHIP counselors with customer service representatives at 1-800-MEDICARE. Seven SHIPs were involved in a pilot project of this system for several months and have found that it significantly enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of their counselors' interaction with 1-800-MEDICARE.

Oregon is one of ten states that were added to this system and we may begin using it immediately, following the instructions below.

- A SHIP-only number is established that will allow you to reach customer service representatives at 1-800-MEDICARE. That SHIP number is 1-888-647-6701. Your counselors should call 1-888-647-6701 for any issue for which they would have called 1-800-MEDICARE previously. This number is not to be given to beneficiaries.
- SHIP counselors in your state with Unique IDs issued through the SHIPTalk.org web site will be eligible to use the SHIP number. The counselors that you have registered are uploaded from SHIPTalk.org to the Unique ID database at 1-800-MEDICARE. It is important to note that those are not instantaneous uploads and there could be a delay of a few weeks between assigning a new Unique ID and having the system recognize that ID.
- When a counselor calls 1-888-647-6701, an automated voice will prompt the counselor to enter his or her Unique ID.
- Counselors must enter the full Unique ID, complete with a numeric prefix that corresponds to your state. The numeric prefix for Oregon is 37. For example, if a counselor's Unique ID is OR00001, the counselor should enter 3700001 when prompted to enter his/her Unique ID.
- If the counselor enters his/her Unique ID correctly, s/he will receive a very brief list of options from a recorded menu (described in the next bullet point). If the counselor does not enter the Unique ID correctly or enters an invalid Unique ID, s/he will hear the regular menu of options presented to all callers who call 1-800-MEDICARE. So, if counselors report to you that they see no difference in the menus, they are likely entering invalid Unique IDs.
- Assuming that the correct ID is entered, the counselor will hear a very brief menu of options as follows:
  - Press 1 for General Medicare issues (these include Part D questions or calls to enroll in a plan)
  - Press 2 for hospital issues to reach a Part A agent
  - Press 3 for physician issues to reach a Part B agent
  - Press 4 for medical equipment issues to reach a DME agent
  - Press 5 to disenroll from a Part D plan

- The efficiency in this system comes from the counselor selecting the appropriate option from this menu. The menu is designed to be very short and to the point to encourage counselors to listen and select the appropriate option. It is purposely not as long and descriptive as the menus for accessing customer service representatives through the 1-800-MEDICARE number, as CMS assumes SHIP counselors can use the shorthand menus described above. Counselors who do not choose the appropriate option will not see increased efficiency from the system.

It is important to note that this number will not bypass or put a SHIP counselor in any kind of priority wait for a customer service representative. If there is a wait time for callers to 1-800-MEDICARE, the SHIP counselor will experience that wait. However, during our 5-month pilot, SHIPs reported a significantly enhanced experience and shorter call times as the quick menu and appropriate routing to the correct type of CSR created a much more efficient call for SHIP counselors.

If counselors have questions or experience any difficulties in using this new number, please notify Lisa via email at [lisa.emerson@state.or.us](mailto:lisa.emerson@state.or.us).

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