

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
7500 Security Boulevard, Mail Stop S1-01-26
Baltimore, Maryland 21244-1850



Office of Beneficiary Information Services

To: All Medicare Advantage (MA) only, Medicare Advantage Prescription Drug (MA-PD) Plans, and Stand Alone Prescription Drug Plans (PDPs). Excludes Cost Plans, PACE and Employer Plans

From: Timothy P. Walsh, Director of Website Project Management Group (OBIS)
Cynthia G. Tudor, PhD, Director of Medicare Drug Benefit Group (CBC)
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Date: October 2, 2007

Re: Online Enrollment Center (OEC) Timeline and Requirements for the 2008 Plan Year

This memorandum details the requirements for participating in the Online Enrollment Center (OEC), a means by which prospective members can submit MA, MA-PD and PDP enrollment applications online. During the last annual enrollment period (AEP), the OEC facilitated approximately 350,000 enrollments. Plans that participate in the OEC and fail to download OEC enrollments on a daily basis will have disciplinary action taken against them.

Online Enrollment Center (OEC) “Opt-out” Notification for the 2008 Plan Year

Participation in the OEC is voluntary for MA-only, MA-PD, and stand-alone Prescription Drug Plans and will require participating plans to accept a standardized version of a plan enrollment form. Similar to last year, there will be two versions of the Online Enrollment Form. Plans are able to download the online enrollments from the OEC in a PDF or flat text file format, containing information similar to that of the model MA and PDP enrollment forms.¹ Please refer to the attached Medicare Online Enrollment Center File Layout document for more information on the file layout. Participation in the OEC will not preclude any plan from seeking approval and using its own customized plan enrollment form for non-OEC enrollments.

Plans that would like to “opt-out”, i.e., elect NOT to participate in the OEC, must send an email to Juliette.Toure@cms.hhs.gov by COB on Wednesday, October 10, 2007 with the following information:

1. Include in the subject of the email “OEC Opt-out Request 2008”
2. List the contract ID(s) and plan ID(s) that are opting out
3. Provide a contact name, telephone, and email for an individual within your organization regarding any questions that CMS may have about your request

¹ CMS recommends downloading the enrollments in the flat text file format since it will be more time efficient for the plans. PDF files are each about 200 KBs and if a plan receives a large volume of enrollments, the download process may take an inordinate amount of time.

Opting out will mean that an “Enroll” button will not be associated with the specified plan(s) within the Medicare Options Compare (MOC) and/or the Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Finder (MPDPF) on www.medicare.gov beginning on November 15, 2007.

NOTE: The period between October 3, 2007 and October 10, 2007 will be the ONLY opportunity plans will have to decline participation in the OEC during the AEP from November 15, 2007 to December 31, 2007. If the plan does not communicate an opt-out, the plan will be required to participate in the OEC for the 2008 plan year and meet all of the requirements related to downloading and processing enrollments. Once the October 10 deadline has passed, organizations will NOT have the opportunity to change the OEC participation status until December 10-14, 2007, which will be updated on the web site in January 2008.

Special Needs Plans (SNPs) may want to consider opting out, due to strict enrollment requirements and to limit ineligible applicants from enrolling online.

CMS Requirements for Plans Participating in the OEC:

- All plans that have not opted-out from participating in the OEC by October 10, 2007 in accordance with the instructions above are obligated to accept enrollments received through the OEC as complete requests since they will contain all of the required data for enrollments. Plans can follow up with the member to get any optional information that is required by the plan, but the processing of the enrollment cannot be delayed while the plan waits for the additional information.
- All plans are expected to log into the Administrative Console (<https://enrollmentcenter.medicare.gov/AdministrativeConsole/PlanFinder/login.aspx>) ***at least once every business day*** and download any pending enrollments. For those plans new to the 2008 Plan Year, log-in IDs and passwords were sent to the OEC Contacts listed in HPMS on September 21st, 2007. Existing plans should use the same log-in IDs and passwords from the 2007 Plan Year. Contact the Plan Compare Help Desk at plancompare@destinationrx.com for log-in issues.
- Plans have access to information to validate the confirmation number. When necessary, they can have the enrollment re-set so that they can download the enrollment again. All valid OEC confirmation numbers are 14 digits in length and will always start with the number “1”. Plans should first ensure that the number meets this format.
- An organization can establish a link to the OEC directly from its web site in order to accept “third party enrollments” from Medicare.gov. This option is available only if you choose to participate in the OEC. Information regarding the requirements to link to the OEC are posted in the “Help” section of the Administrative Console and attached to this memo.

NOTE: Plans that have a link to the OEC from an external web site and decide to opt-out of the OEC will be required to disable the link in order to avoid having to download enrollments from the OEC received from the external web site.

- If the enrollee does have a valid online enrollment center confirmation number, the plan can verify the enrollment through the Administrative Console. The url is: <https://enrollmentcenter.medicare.gov/AdministrativeConsole/PlanFinder/login.aspx>

Log in ID: cms_readonly Password: admin_read

If the enrollment has not been downloaded, the plan should download the enrollment through its usual procedures and process the enrollment.

- If the enrollment has already been downloaded, the plan should send an email to plancompare@destinationrx.com that contains the online enrollment confirmation number and a request that the enrollment be reset so that it can be downloaded again.
- If the plan is unable to find the enrollment in the Administrative Console, the plan can work via email with its designated regional office. The regional office staff can work with CMS central office to try to locate the call record and validate the enrollment.

OEC Timelines for 2007 Plan Year and 2008 Plan Year:

Wednesday, October 10, 2007	Deadline for 2008 Plans’ opportunity to “opt-out” of the OEC for the duration of the AEP.
Thursday, October 11, 2007	2008 Plan Year data will be published on www.medicare.gov . For the 2007 Plan Year, the “Enroll” button will continue to be active for the plans that have not indicated to CMS an opt-out preference.
Thursday, November 15, 2007	“Enroll” buttons will be activated for 2008 plans that have not opted out of the OEC. For the 2007 Plan Year, the “Enroll” button will continue to be active for the plans that have not indicated to CMS an opt-out preference
December 10-14, 2007	Opportunity for 2008 plans to remove or add the “Enroll” button after AEP. Updates will be made in January 2008 for those that submit requests during this period.

Regarding the above timeline, no additional changes will be accepted for the opt-out/opt-in status for the 2007 Plan Year at this point.

OEC Changes for the 2007 Plan Year and the 2008 Plan Year

The 2007 Plan Year online enrollments via OEC will continue to be available until November 30th, 2007 and require a Special Enrollment Period (SEP) code, per the existing CMS enrollment criteria. Beginning November 15, 2007, the OEC will be able to concurrently receive enrollment applications for the 2007 and 2008 Plan Years, including enrollments from both Medicare.gov and third party enrollments from external web sites.

To accommodate concurrent enrollments and subsequent downloading of both 2007 and 2008 Plan Years, the Web Services data parameters from third party enrollments to OEC have been changed to include the Plan Year parameter as well as posting to a separate URL for the 2007 Plan Year from the 2008 Plan Year (See Attachment – “Web Service data_2008.pdf”). In addition, in order to assist in the management of the 2007 Plan Year and the 2008 Plan Year enrollments, the Administrative Console has been revised to include a separate link for the 2007 Plan Year enrollments and one for the 2008 Plan Year. Finally, the OEC File Layout has been changed for both 2007 and 2008 Plan Years to include the Plan Year parameter (See Attachments – “Part D OEC File Layout_1.9.3.pdf” and “Part D OEC File Layout 2008.pdf”).

Plans that are participating in the OEC and do not download and process enrollments from the OEC on a timely basis will lose the privilege of participating in the OEC. CMS will be tracking and taking disciplinary action toward delinquent plans, including placing repeat offenders on Corrective Action Plans (CAPs).

If you have any questions about this message or need to verify that you are taking the appropriate actions about opting-out or -in, please participate on the Part D User Group Call, October 3, 2007 or email Juliette.Toure@cms.hhs.gov. For questions about disciplinary actions:

- PDPs should contact the Central Office Account Manager
- MAs and MA-PDs should contact the Regional Office Plan Manager

Teleconference: (866) 793-1340; Password: Formulary