

# SSP ACO Beneficiary Information Notice Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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# SSP ACO Beneficiary Information Notice FAQs

## Q1. I'm a Medicare Beneficiary, so what does this letter mean for me?

This letter explains **your** primary care provider, where you receive most of your healthcare, has teamed up with other health care practitioners in a network called an Accountable Care Organization (ACO). An ACO supports **your** provider in their goal of personalizing and improving **your** healthcare and offering access to more services within the ACO's network of clinicians.

## Q2. What is an Accountable Care Organization (ACO)?

An Accountable Care Organization (ACO) is a group of doctors, hospitals, and other health care providers who accept Original Medicare (**Parts A and B**) and work together to coordinate **your** health care.

- You get patient-centered care focused on your needs.
- Your health care providers can see the same test results, treatments, and prescriptions.
- More coordination helps prevent medical errors and drug interactions.
- You may save time, money, and frustration by avoiding repeated tests and appointments.
- Better communication can help protect against Medicare fraud and waste.

ACO providers communicate with each other and partner with **you** in making health care decisions. This sharing of information, sometimes through Electronic Health Records (EHRs), can help prevent repeated medical tests and save you time on paperwork.

Imagine an ACO like a sports team. The ACO "**team**" can only win the championship when they give you high-quality, coordinated care. Each player, from doctors to nurses to administrative staff, has a specific position and skill set. The ACO leadership develops its playbook of strategies and makes sure there is teamwork, communication, and collaboration among all players. **Your** primary care provider is the quarterback of the team, making crucial decisions and coordinating **your** care with other team specialists. The ultimate goal for a sports team is to win a championship; for an ACO, it's to improve **your** overall health and satisfaction.

## Q3. How can the Accountable Care Organization (ACO) help me?

ACOs can provide benefits to patients in many ways, including (when applicable):

- For those who qualify, providing additional support services such as Care Management, which could include creating a personalized care plan for the patient; helping patients self-manage their medications; finding community resources for patients; etc.
- Offering computer, tablet, or phone visits (telehealth) for your convenience and to help prevent hospital admissions.
- Admission to certain skilled nursing facilities any time you need therapy, even if you have not had a 3-day hospital stay.

You can check with your health care provider or the ACO to see what benefits are available to patients, like you, who may qualify.

#### Q4. Why does the letter refer to an organization I've never heard of?

The name of the ACO may be different than the primary health care provider you see. ACOs are a network of health care practitioners with several different participating medical providers, such as primary care practices, hospitals, specialists, pharmacies, and other Medicare-enrolled providers that provide care for patients. So, though you may not recognize the ACO's name, you **are** receiving the letter because your primary care physician or another healthcare provider you see is participating in the ACO. If you have questions about the ACO listed on your letter, you may call their number that is provided in the letter or call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227. TTY users can call 1-877-486-2048.

#### Q5. Are you trying to sell me something? What does this cost me?

**No**, we are **not** trying to sell you anything. There is **no** additional cost to you just because your health care provider decided to partner with an ACO and there is absolutely **no change to your Medicare benefits**. Your Medicare benefits are the same as they have been, and you will continue to have access to any Medicare enrolled provider or supplier of your choice.

#### Q6. Why is my primary clinician sharing my health care information with the ACO? How does this benefit me?

One of the most important benefits of your primary care physician's participation in an ACO is that **all** your doctors and other healthcare providers can communicate with each other about your overall healthcare needs and work together to coordinate the best healthcare plan for you. By agreeing to **share** your personal healthcare data in this way, you are helping to make sure all the healthcare professionals involved in your healthcare have access to your complete health information when and where they need it. Your decision to **share** your healthcare information allows all your healthcare professionals to work together to get you the care you need.

#### Q7. How do I stop Medicare from sharing my information?

If you decide you do not want Medicare to share your health care information with the physicians and healthcare providers responsible for trying to take care of all your healthcare needs, you can call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) and "opt out" of data sharing. You will need to tell the representative you do not want your personal healthcare information shared between all the healthcare providers trying to service your healthcare needs. TTY users can call 1-877-486-2048. If you decide you do not want Medicare to share your health care information with the doctors and professionals trying to service your healthcare needs, you should understand Medicare will still use your healthcare information for some purposes, like evaluating the financial performance of the healthcare services you received as well as the quality of care you received. "Opting out" of data sharing does not mean you will stop receiving additional letters, notifications and/or communications from the ACO.

#### Q8. Is the ACO a Medicare Advantage Plan or an HMO?

An ACO is **not** a Medicare Advantage Plan, a health maintenance organization (HMO) plan **or** an insurance plan of any kind. An ACO has an agreement with Medicare to be financially accountable for the quality, cost and experience of care you receive from your health care provider. If you want to know more about the **differences** between an ACO and a Medicare Advantage Plan, please go to the following website: <https://www.cms.gov/priorities/innovation/media/document/ma-vs-aco-fs-oct2022>.