



**Medicare Shared Savings Program**  
**ACO Participants & ACO Provider/Suppliers**  
**Script for Front Desk/Telephone Staff & Phone Inquiries**

**What's an ACO?**

- An Accountable Care Organization (ACO) is a group of doctors and other health care providers who agree to work together with Medicare to give you the best possible care.
- An ACO is **not** a Medicare Advantage Plan or Health Maintenance Organization (HMO). You're still in Original Medicare, and your Medicare benefits, services, rights and protections haven't changed. You still have the right to use any doctor or hospital that accepts Medicare at any time, the same way you do now.
- The goal of the ACO is to support your doctors in caring for you by making sure they have the most up-to-date information about your health and your care. For you, this means your doctors communicate better with each other, and avoid administering duplicate tests or answering the same questions over and over.
- Working together, your doctors can do more to monitor your health, make sure you receive the highest quality care. They may hire additional staff to help meet your unique care needs, depending on what works best for you.

**How do ACOs coordinate patient care?**

- ACOs may take different approaches to giving you coordinated care. Some ACOs may have special nurses that help you set up appointments or make sure your medications are in order when you enter or leave a hospital. Other ACOs may help your doctors get you equipment for monitoring your medical conditions better at home, if you need it.
- Most ACOs use advanced systems that let them more carefully coordinate your care and ensure your doctor has the most up-to-date information about your health.

**How do I know if a doctor participates in an ACO?**

- Doctors and other health care providers choose to participate in an ACO because they're committed to providing you with a better care experience. They may also be financially rewarded for offering you better, more coordinated care.
- If a doctor is participating in an ACO, you'll see a poster with information about ACOs and their participation displayed in the patient area of their facility.



### **How does being in an ACO help my doctor?**

Doctors in ACOs may have greater access to the expertise, staff, and technologies they need to make sure your care is coordinated across all the places you get services. For you, this coordination could mean less paperwork to fill out at the doctor's office, avoiding unnecessary tests, or more help for you in dealing with any health conditions.

### **If I haven't been notified that a doctor is participating in an ACO, what do I need to do?**

You don't need to do anything right now. Even though a doctor is participating in an ACO, your Medicare benefits won't change. You'll still have Original Medicare (Medicare Fee-for Service) and you'll still have the right to use any doctor or hospital that accepts Medicare, at any time.

### **Do I have to participate in an ACO if my doctor does?**

Only your doctor participates in the ACO. As the patient, you do not participate in the ACO.

You can continue getting care from your doctor. Or, you can choose to see a doctor who doesn't participate in an ACO.

### **Can I still see my other regular Medicare doctors and health care providers, even though my primary physician participates in an ACO?**

Yes, that doesn't change. Always keep in mind that:

- You can still go to any doctor, hospital, or other provider that accepts Medicare. Nobody can restrict which providers you see.
- You're still in Original Medicare.
- You're still entitled to all the same Medicare services, benefits, and protections.

### **Can I still choose to receive services from any new doctor, hospital, or health care provider that I want to?**

You can still choose to go to any doctor, hospital, or other health care provider that accepts Medicare. Nobody – not even your primary doctor – can prevent you from seeing the doctors, hospitals or providers you want.



### **What information about me will the ACO have access to?**

To help doctors who participate in an ACO give patients like you the best possible care, Medicare wants to share some additional information about your care with the ACO.

This information includes things like doctor, hospital, and pharmacy visits in the past and going forward. Your health care information helps the ACO track the services you've already received, understand where you may need more care, and find ways to smooth the path for you if you have to transfer in or out of a hospital, or from the care of one doctor to another.

### **What if I don't want to share my information with ACOs?**

If you do not want Medicare to share your health care information with the ACO for the purpose of coordinating your care, you must call 1-800 MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). Tell the representative that your doctor is part of an ACO and you don't want Medicare to share your health care information. TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048.

After you talk with someone at 1-800 MEDICARE, Medicare will update its records to show that you don't want to share your health care information. If you call 1-800 Medicare, you'll get a letter confirming this change. It'll take about 45 days for this change to take effect.

Even if you decline to share your health care information, Medicare will still use your information for some purposes, including certain financial calculations and determining the quality of care given by your health care providers participating in ACOs.

### **What if I change my mind and decide that I do want to share my health care information in the future?**

If you change your mind in the future, call 1-800 Medicare (1-800-633-4227). Tell them you've changed your mind and that now you want to share your health care information with any ACO in which your doctor or other health care providers participates. You'll get a letter confirming this change.