Medicare Number (HICN) Format Changes

December 12, 2016

Since the start of the Medicare program, beneficiaries have used their social security number in order to claim benefits with a suffix that designated how they are receiving their benefits (retired, disabled, railroad worker, etc.). With enormous concern about the privacy and security of all patients around the country disclosing social security numbers to providers offices, hospitals, and other healthcare providers, CMS is changing the way that Medicare beneficiaries identify themselves starting in 2018. Like most private health insurance and Medicaid carriers, Medicare beneficiaries are going to be given an unique ID number that will not include any part of their social security number. The new format will be an alpha-numeric, eleven digit ID as part of the Social Security Number Removal Initiative (SSNRI).

The new Medicare number, formerly known as a Health Insurance Claim Number (HICN), will be replaced by the Medicare Beneficiary Identifier (MBI). Medicare beneficiaries will start receiving new cards in early 2018 with their MBI, which should be used effective April 2018. During the transition period, which will last until the end of 2019, all healthcare providers will be able to submit claims, check eligibility, and perform other routine business with either the dated Medicare HICN or the new MBI.

However, providers will be strongly encouraged to update patient demographics with the new ID number. At the start of 2020, the HICN will no longer be accepted for any claim transactions. While it is more than a year away before these changes go into effect, providers are encouraged to start thinking about possible changes in workflow when it comes to registering their patients, since it will take more time to register patients, to update demographics, rework eligibility workflow, and other concerns. See the following link below for additional information and how MBIs will be created:

⇒ *https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/SSNRI/Index.html* (General Information related to SSNRI)
⇒ *https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/SSNRI/MBI-Format-PDF.PDF* (Fact sheet on how the MBI will be created)