

Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey (MCBS)

Request for Approval of a Non-Substantive Change

OMB No. 0938-0568
(Expires 08/31/2023)

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A1. Circumstances making the collection of information necessary

This request is for a non-substantive change to an approved data collection (OMB No. 0938-0568, expires 08/31/2023). The current clearance encompasses the MCBS Community questionnaire, Community respondent materials, Facility screener, Facility instrument, and Facility respondent materials.

Non-substantive Change

This change request seeks approval to implement a non-substantive change to the MCBS advance letters sent to new panel members (referred to as Incoming Panel). Traditionally, the MCBS has conducted outreach to new panel members in person. Beginning in 2020, outreach by phone is also conducted. As part of the most recent MCBS clearance, CMS submitted three types of advance letters: one that specifies a beneficiary will receive a phone call, a second that is used if an in-person visit will be conducted and a third that invites the beneficiary to contact MCBS. At the time of the OMB submission and approval (which was received 2/4/2021), phone outreach was anticipated for the Fall 2021 Incoming Panel.

However, CMS has determined that some in-person contact may be conducted during Fall 2021, especially to boost response rates from sampled beneficiaries for whom a working phone number cannot be obtained. Therefore, this request adds two advance letter types for use when certain respondents may be contacted in-person if they have not responded to previous phone contact attempts.

Based on past experience using electronic database searches prior to mailing, telephone numbers will initially be available for approximately 55 percent of beneficiaries. For the remaining 45 percent of beneficiaries for whom a phone number is not available, locating and tracing efforts are employed to increase the availability of phone numbers and maximize response. Ultimately though, a working phone number is not anticipated for about eight percent of sampled beneficiaries

As always, data collection for the fall round begins toward the end of July in order to allow time to locate the new sample and gain cooperation. This year, Fall 2021 Round 91 data collection begins on July 19, 2021; the first advance mailing will begin on or about July 12, 2021. To use the two advance letter versions proposed in this submission, OMB approval is needed by June 24, 2021 to allow sufficient time to print and mail these letters. The revised letters are in Attachment A, with track changes to highlight changes over previously-approved text. The only changes made to the letters are to clarify to the beneficiary that contact by both phone and in person may be forthcoming.

A2. Purpose and use of information collection

MCBS data collection is traditionally conducted in-person. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, MCBS shifted to phone only data collection in March 2020. The MCBS is planning to continue phone outreach but also return to limited in-person outreach for Fall 2021 Round 91 in areas where it is deemed safe and contacting attempts by phone and mail are unsuccessful.

Each year beginning in July, CMS pulls an extract of Medicare beneficiaries from the CMS administrative enrollment data. Beneficiaries are then sampled from that extract and added to the MCBS each fall round. The CMS administrative enrollment data contains the beneficiary's name and address; it does not include a telephone number or an email address.

The purpose of this non-substantive change is to implement minor changes to the MCBS advance letters sent to Incoming Panel members. The reason for the non-substantive change is, in the event we are unable to reach these sampled beneficiaries by phone, in-person contact may be attempted. The revised advance letters notify selected beneficiaries that an interviewer will be contacting them to conduct an interview, and that an interviewer may contact them in person if they cannot reach them by phone. All other content remains the same as approved by OMB including providing a toll free number and email address for beneficiaries to use to schedule an interview. Please see Exhibit A for summary of the Community advance letter versions, both the three currently approved by OMB and the two new letters comprising this non-substantive change request.

Exhibit A. Summary of Community Advance Letter Versions

Advance Letter Version	Status	Revision Overview
1. Advance Letter In Person	Currently Approved (2/4/2021)	N/A
2. Advance Letter Phone	Currently Approved (2/4/2021)	N/A
3. Reminder Advance Letter Phone	Currently Approved (2/4/2021)	N/A
4. Advance Letter Multimode	New	Minor modifications to Advance Letter to clarify both Phone and In Person Text
5. Reminder Advance Letter Multimode	New	Minor modifications to Reminder Advance Letter to clarify both Phone and In Person Text

Included in Attachment A are the following materials:

1. Community Advance Letter Multimode:
 - o An update to the previously approved Community Advance Letter In Person with text to address varying contact methods;
2. Community Reminder Advance Letter Multimode:
 - o An update to the previously approved Reminder Advance Letter Phone with text to address varying contact methods

Attachments:

A – Updated Advance Letters to Reflect Varying Contact Methods