

Accountable Care Organizations

2015 SHIP Worksheet

“Accountable Care Organization” (ACOs) are an initiative of CMS to promote reduction of Medicare costs through improved coordination of patient care.

ACOs are organizations – more than half of which nationally are led by physicians – that operate only with CMS approval. They are comprised of local health providers and hospitals that have volunteered to work together through the ACO to provide patients with coordinated care, a system in which providers communicate and partner with the patient and one another in making health care decisions. More than half of the people in North Carolina live in an area served by at least one ACO.

Coordinated care and the sharing of information among providers may mean:

- ✓ *Fewer repeated medical tests because doctors and hospitals will share information and coordinate patient care.*
- ✓ *Less time spent by patients filling out medical history paper work because doctors may already have that information in an electronic health record.*
- ✓ *Assurance that the patient and the patient’s health care choices will be the “center of care” – that doctors will be better able to access, understand and honor patient health care choices.*

CMS assures beneficiaries participating in an ACO that the privacy and security of patients’ medical information is protected by federal law. It is also important to note that ACOs cannot tell beneficiaries which health care providers to see and ACOs cannot change Medicare benefits. And remember: if a beneficiary has questions or isn’t sure if his or her doctor is in a Medicare ACO, they need to contact the doctor’s office and ask.

If the beneficiary prefers, however, he may choose to have his name and other personal information removed from the information that Medicare shares with his doctor by taking one of these steps:

- Call 1-800-MEDICARE
- Sign a form available in your doctor or other health care provider’s office

If contacted by letter, beneficiaries have 30 days from the date they are notified to take one of these steps so that medical information will not be shared.

Late in 2014 CMS announced 89 new Medicare Shared Savings Plan (MSSP) Accountable Care Organizations (ACO), bringing the nationwide total of MSSP ACOs to 405. Of the new ACOs announced, seven have service areas in North Carolina.

- Cape Fear Valley ACO
- Carolina Medical Home Network ACO (NC FQHCs)
- Coastal Plains Network (Vidant)
- CHESS (Cornerstone, Wake Forest Baptist)
- Mission Health Partners
- PACN (Pinehurst Accountable Care Network)
- Pioneer Health Alliance (service area includes Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia)

For more information about the ACO program, go to:

<http://www.medicare.gov/manage-your-health/coordinating-your-care/accountable-care-organizations.html>

A PDF of Frequently Asked Questions about Accountable Care Organizations can be found here:

<http://www.medicare.gov/Publications/Search/results.asp?PubID=11588&PubLanguage=1&Type=PubID>