



LOCAL HELP FOR PEOPLE WITH MEDICARE

## **1-800-MEDICARE Direct Number for SHIP Counselors**

CMS has designed a system to enhance the interaction of SHIP counselors with CMS customer service representatives at 1-800-MEDICARE.

- A number has been established for SHIP counselors that allow counselors to reach CMS customer service representatives at 1-800-MEDICARE. That number is **1-888-647-6701**.
- SHIP counselors with *Unique IDs* issued through the SHIPtalk.org Web site are eligible to use the SHIP number. When a counselor calls 1-888-647-6701, an automated voice will prompt the counselor to enter his or her Unique ID. The Unique ID number is the individual's assigned 8-character Unique ID number (viewable from the users' 'Edit My Profile' tab in NPR).
- If the counselor enters his/her *Unique ID* correctly, s/he receives a very brief list of options from a recorded menu (described in the next bullet point). If the counselor does not enter the *Unique ID* correctly or enters an invalid Unique ID, s/he will hear the regular menu of options presented to all callers who call 1-800-MEDICARE.
- Assuming that the correct ID is entered, the counselor will hear a very brief menu of options as follows:

**Press 1** for General Medicare issues (these include Part D questions or calls to enroll in a plan)

**Press 2** for hospital issues to reach a Part A agent

**Press 3** for physician issues to reach a Part B agent

**Press 4** for medical equipment issues to reach a DME agent

**Press 5** to disenroll from a Part D plan

The efficiency in this system comes from the counselor selecting the appropriate option from this menu. The menu is designed to be very short and to the point to encourage counselors to listen and select the appropriate option. It is purposely not as long and descriptive as the menus for accessing customer service representatives through the 1-800-MEDICARE number, as CMS assumes SHIP counselors can use the shorthand menus described above. Counselors who do not choose the appropriate option will not see increased efficiency from the system.

- It is important to note that this number will not bypass or put a SHIP counselor in any kind of priority wait for a customer service representative.