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Medicare Part A Cost Report: Easier File Uploads in MCReF Webcast

Moderated by Diane Maupai
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Operator: Hello, and welcome to today's Medicare Learning Network® event. My name is Sara, and I will be your web event specialist.

We're using webcast technology today. We recommend streaming the audio live through your computer speakers. All lines have been placed on mute to prevent any background noise. Please note that today's event is being recorded. For best viewing and participation, please disable your pop-up blockers.

After the presentation, we'll have a question-and-answer session. To submit a question or comment or to ask a question via the web, locate the Q&A box on the left-hand side of your screen, type your question in the open area, and click "New Question." We'll also take questions via the phone lines and instructions on how to do so will be given at the appropriate time.

It is now my pleasure to turn today's program over to Diane Maupai. Diane, you may begin.

Announcements & Introduction

Diane Maupai: Thank you. This is Diane Maupai from the Provider Communications Group at CMS and I'm your moderator today. Welcome to this Medicare Learning Network webcast on Medicare Part A Cost Report: Easier File Upload for the Medicare Cost Report e-Filing System.

Before we get started, there are a few items that I'd like to cover. As she mentioned, you can download a copy of today's presentation by clicking the "Handout" button in the bottom of your screen.

This webcast is open to everyone. If you're a member of the press, you're welcome to listen. But please don't ask questions during the Q&A session. Send your inquiries to press@cms.hhs.gov.

I'll now turn the call over to Owen Osaghae, Technical Adviser in the Division of Provider Audit Operations in CMS.

Presentation

Owen Osaghae: Hi. Thank you, Diane. My name again is Owen Osaghae. I work in the Division of Provider Audit Operations. My division is responsible for the cost report receipt, acceptance, audit, and final settlement.

Today, Jolene is going to be doing the main presentation and I will be back for questions and answers. And I'm going to hand over to Jolene now.

Jolene Nguyen: Great. Thanks, Owen. Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Jolene Nguyen, and I am a Senior Consultant for CGI Federal, who are the system maintainer for the PS&R and MCReF systems.

So, welcome to today's webinar, which covers the new user-friendly upload feature for Medicare Part A Cost Report in MCReF.

Background and Overview

Going to slide 2, this slide just has a list of acronyms that may be said throughout the presentation today. And it's for your reference when accessing these slides at a later time.

Going to slide 3. Today, we are here to talk about how the MCReF functionality is being expanded in May. And so, we have this existing system, MCReF, which you may have used in the past to e-File your cost report and track the status of your cost reports. And now, we're excited to announce that MCReF is being updated to support even more documents as part of your cost report materials, as well as a new user-friendly upload feature.

Going to slide 4. For today's agenda, we've already started with introductions. Next, we'll provide a little bit of business background and overview, so that we know what part of Medicare we're talking about that MCReF deals with. And then, we'll provide a high-level overview and walkthrough of MCReF itself, going through the latest planned updates, as well as the typical e-Filing process, followed by general outreach efforts, and then, finally finish with a live question-and-answer session at the end.

Going to slide 5. We know there are a large number of participants on the line with a variety of different backgrounds and expertise. So, we just want to make sure we're all on the same page as to what MCReF is all about and that's the Medicare cost report.

In general, the Medicare cost report is used to determine Part A providers' annual Medicare reimbursable cost. And providers use a large number of sources to create their cost reports, including CMS's existing system, the Provider Statistical and Reimbursement System, otherwise known as PS&R.

There are approximately 50,000 cost reports submitted each year, which account for over $200 billion worth of Medicare reimbursement. And so, providers themselves have a regulation-driven deadline for submitting an acceptable cost report to their Medicare administrative contractor, and then, next, have a policy-guided requirement for receiving, accepting, reviewing, auditing, and finalizing cost reports.

Going to slide 6. When looking at the history of how cost report submissions were handled, previously, providers would create their MCR package and mail or hand deliver it to their MACs with the majority of cost reports being sent in that way and maybe a few being transmitted via portal websites made available by some MACs.

Once MCReF went live in May 2018, providers still have the option to mail or hand deliver their MCR package, but, with MCReF, they were now universally able to electronically transmit or e-File their MCR. Since then, we've had a good number of enhancements, such as, last year, in April 2020, when MCReF was updated to allow for tracking of users' cost report statuses throughout the settlement process. And then, in October 2020, MCReF was expanded to allow for bulk e-Filing. Coming in the next few weeks, we are adding another improvement to simplify uploading files, which is what we'll be primarily talking about today.

Going to slide 7. Before we get into the latest updates, we wanted to also provide some context and feedback we've received on MCReF since go live. So, since MCReF's go live in 2018, we've had over 48,000 submissions submitted via MCReF, each taking about 3.2 seconds to complete. And given the ease and

instant response of the system, users were able to correct any errors without needing extra correspondence with their MAC, which also led to faster tentative settlement payment.

In terms of the current year to date, we've had about 55 percent of all MCR submissions being e-Filed through MCReF. Overall, providers have really responded positively with MCReF and the process of e-Filing.

Going to slide 8. And so, all of these enhancements we have done for MCReF is in service of making this product better for the group to use, which is in line with CMS's goal to expand usage of MCReF by making it easier for users and adding value to the system by making it provide more information you need.

Going to slide 9. And to further achieve CMS's goal to make MCReF easier to use, the latest changes that we are making to the system will address one of the most common pieces of feedback we received where the system currently requires you to hit "Browse" multiple times for their cost report materials. So, the new setup is going to allow users to attach all files without needing to ZIP them beforehand.

Additionally, we are pulling out everything that is currently categorized as "Other" to tag them at a more granular level. And this would allow users to more clearly identify and tag a document as a particular supporting file, such as working trial balance. So, that is easier for your MAC to find, which would lead to less back and forth communication and, hopefully, accelerate the overall process.

And, in turn, by individually identifying these files, the system is going to be able to alert you if there's anything the MAC is likely to need that we don't see in your cost report submission. And so, before we get into the details of all these changes, we also wanted to provide a reminder that, as before, MCReF usage is still entirely optional. And the system will continue to be accessible to IDM, PS&R security officials, and backup security officials, and, also, MCReF-approved cost report filers designated by the security official.

Going to slide 10. Even though MCReF is optional, there are many advantages to using it. In general, MCReF is very easy to use, and it provides one process for all Part A providers to follow regardless of MAC via one official submission portal, which ultimately reduces confusions, delays, and time you may spend on administrative processes.

The other thing that MCReF provides is a direct response regarding the receivability of your cost report submission. So, sometimes you'll mail in your submission and it'll take several days for it to get to your MACs. And then, you'll – they'll make a determination as to whether it was received or not. With MCReF, the moment you click the "Submit" button, the system starts processing immediately and you'll be able to come back to check on its status once the processing is complete.

Another thing we're seeing with filings made via MCReF is that they are tentatively settled faster. And with the tracking functionality in MCReF, providers have greater transparency through live insights on the status of your cost reports as they go through each stage of the MAC settlement process.

Going to slide 11. Now, we'll get into more detail of MCReF itself and how to access it. And then, from there, we'll actually go through some screenshots of the changes to the system and how the system works from login through the updated e-Filing process and submission.

MCReF Walkthrough and Detailed Overview

Going to slide 12. MCReF is still accessible at the same site via the URL listed on the slide at mcref.cms.gov. The system is now run by CMS's identity management system, IDM, which is essentially an upgraded version of EIDM. All existing accounts were brought over as is and there is no impact to your account. So, you can still use the same logins and passwords as you've been using.

As of right now, access to MCReF is restricted to IDM PS&R security officials, backup security officials, and MCReF-approved cost report filers as designated by security officials. Anyone that has the existing PS&R SO or the SO role will, by default, have access to MCReF. So, you won't have to do anything to change your role. You'll just be able to access the URL and log-in. Any organization that doesn't have access to PS&R will have to enroll a PS&R SO within IDM in order to access MCReF.

One thing that's particularly important if you do want to use MCReF is to keep your IDM SO and BSO accounts in good standing. And this includes updating your password per CMS's policies and procedures and the timely replacement of your security official, you know, due to turnover or changes in staff.

Any issues with your IDM account, your credentials or being able to log in will not be a valid reason for filing your cost report late because you can always drop your cost report in the mail as you do today if, for some reason, you're having IDM issues.

Going to slide 13. When you first navigate to mcref.cms.gov, you'll get this page here and here you'll enter in your username and password, agree to the terms and conditions by clicking the checkbox, and then, click the "Sign In" button.

Going to slide 14. As a reminder, this is the existing MCReF homepage, which has a dashboard view showing the status of your cost report across all providers and FYEs, with the ability to navigate to see cost report details and to e-File for a given provider and FYE.

As a reminder, if a user were to click on e-File CR link, they would see the following on the next slide, slide 15, the e-File cost report materials page. And so, again, as a reminder, this is how the page currently looks today to a user trying to e-File for a specific provider and FYE and what is going to be replaced with the latest update.

You can see on the screen that each of the documents have their own individual slots in the table. And to include documents for those slots, users would need to hit "Browse" for each one individually. So, browse for an ECR, attach it; browse for a print image, attach it; and so on and so forth.

Going to slide 16. This is how the page is going to be updated to look when a user first accesses the system – or sorry, the screen. The top half of the page is the same. However, this table with the dedicated slot is no longer there. Instead, the table reflects there is nothing added yet and I can use the "Add File" button to add my cost report materials.

Going to slide 17. Instead of needing to hit "Browse" for each of those files as seen previously, a user can select the "Add Files" button, which will open up the file selection dialogue box.

Going to slide 18. Here, users will have the ability to select multiple files for their cost report material. Essentially, instead of needing to browse for each of these files separately, you only need to select "Add File" once and select all your files in one go. And then, as part of selecting multiple files, as a result, one of the things you'll note is that there is no requirement to pre-zip files under this approach when filing for an individual provider and FYE.

So, in this example, we've selected multiple files. And going to the next slide. Now, the table has been updated with all of the files that the user selected.

Overall, the system will try to identify the documents based on the filename, some of which are already in place from the vendors producing them, as you can see on the screen, such as for the ECR, IRIS, etcetera.

Another that – anything that isn't named in a way the system would recognize, we would just automatically put as "Other" as seen at the bottom of the table in this example. Another thing to note, as part of these updates, instead of an asterisk next to the file name, we're indicating up above the "Add Files" button in red text which files are required.

Some materials are going to be required based on the type of provider you are or the Medicare utilization you have selected. So, you'll see in the example on the slide that the ECR Print Image and signed Certification Page are required. OK. So, if you want to identify any of these documents as a specific file category they fall into, you can do so by using the dropdown on the left.

Going to the next slide, 20. If you click on that dropdown, you can change the document from "Other" to one of the other groupings and file categories in the list here. The various file categories are grouped into three different sorts of buckets, where acceptability documents are the main document that would be expected for an acceptable cost report.

Supporting documents are additional common documents the MAC might be looking for. And then, "Other" documents are for anything else. Each of these also comes with the colored indicators you can see on the screen next to them.

And so, this categorization is optional for users. You don't need to recategorize these documents as it would also be an option to leave them as "Other" and submit your materials. However, if you do retag them, it will allow the system to point out what is potentially missing and definitely help the MAC identify these documents more easily.

For this example, we will go ahead and recategorize the document. We're going to slide 21. After selecting the appropriate file category from the dropdown, you can see that the row has been updated both with the new file category label, as well as a new colored dot indicator.

Going to slide 22. When I click on the file category column heading, I'll be able to re-sort and organize my table by the various section groupings mentioned earlier with the various files within each section.

So, going to slide 23. Now that the table is sorted, you can see that the various cost report materials are grouped into the acceptability document, supporting document, and the other documents section. Based on the

various cost report materials uploaded, the signed Certification Page that I recategorized from the dropdown moves up to the acceptability document and the rest that I recategorized moves to the supporting document.

Again, this sorting is optional, but may be helpful as a sort of visual checklist of materials that are being included. Once done with uploading the files and recategorizing, we'll go ahead and check the "Acknowledge" box and submit.

Going to slide 24. Assuming there are no other errors with the submission, the confirmation page will load. This page has been updated to also include the various sections of documents for accessibility, supporting, and other, and any labels associated with the new document. Right.

And so, that's essentially how the new tagging feature will work in MCReF. However, we also wanted to walk through a potential scenario for how the system will sort of safeguard and alert you to potentially missing documents for your submission.

Going to slide 25. So, now, we'll walk through a different scenario, but it's going to start in the same way by clicking on the "Add Files" button to select your various cost report materials.

So, on slide 26, then I will upload the materials I want to include in this dialogue box here.

And then, going to slide 27. Once the table is populated with the cost report material, in this case, rather than recategorizing any of the documents as I did before, instead, I will go ahead and choose to acknowledge and submit the materials as is.

Going to slide 28. Here, the submission has run into an error stating that a signed Certification Page is required. So, as you can see on the table, since the document was included, but it was not tagged as the signed Certification Page, the system couldn't recognize it.

Going to slide 29. To address this error, we'll go ahead and select from the dropdown to recategorize the document and tag it to be the signed Certification Page.

Going to slide 30. Now that the document has been retagged, I'll go ahead and check the "Acknowledge" checkbox again, and then, hit "Submit." And when a user hits "Submit," there is some additional processing that happens in the background. The system will check what type of provider you are, as well as the contents of the ECR to see if there are particular amounts that were claimed that warrants if supporting documentation might be needed. If the system identifies these documents and they aren't included in the materials or aren't tagged, then the system would display a warning message.

So, going to slide 31. The warning message will include a bulleted list of items the system has identified as potentially being needed for the submission.

And to note, this is optional. These documents are not required for an acceptable cost report, so you can click "OK" on the warning and nothing will prevent it from being accepted. But, as noted in the warning, if you don't submit the listed documents, your MAC will likely come back to you later when they get to the point where they need these files.

So, following the message might save you some time down the road. In this example, I chose to go ahead and address some of the documents from the warning, clicking "Cancel" to view them.

Going to slide 32. Since some of the documents mentioned in the warning were included and just not tagged, I can go ahead and tag the ones that I had included as part of my cost report materials using the dropdown.

Going to slide 33. And now, I've successfully tagged the PS&R Crosswalk expense revenue grouping and the financial statement or justification document.

Going to slide 34. Again, by clicking on the file category header, as mentioned earlier, I can re-sort the table to do a sort of sanity check of my document in their various grouping.

Going to slide 35. Now, that I have sorted my table, I realize I still don't have the working trial balance document that was mentioned in the warning message. So, I'll go ahead and click on the "Add Files" button again to find that document.

Going to slide 36. From the dialogue box, I'll locate my working trial balance document and add it to my materials in the table.

Going to the next slide, 37. The new document was added to the "Other" section since the system did not recognize it. And you can see that, since this was a newly added document, the row is indicated with a red plus symbol to the right of the dropdown menu.

Going to slide 38. I'll do the same thing I had previously done with the other document and retag the working trial balance document by using the dropdown.

Going to slide 39. At this point, I know I've covered the items that were listed from the warning message. I don't need to re-sort, so I will check the "Acknowledge" box and submit my cost report submission.

Going to slide 40. Assuming there are no other errors, I'll see the confirmation page which includes all the documents from my cost report submission as shown on the screen.

Going to slide 41. All right. So, in addition to being able to use the dropdown to categorize the documents, we also wanted to provide a way that, if you name your files in a certain way, then, the system would be able to automatically slot the files for you. So, this optional naming convention would be for all the additional slots that we're implementing.

One example that we have on the screen is for the bad debt collection policy. As long as the file name began with BD policy, it doesn't matter if it's uppercase or lowercase, it doesn't matter what comes after, as long as it just begins with BD policy, the system would be able to identify it as the bad debt collection policy.

We have some examples of different filenames that follow the naming convention shown at the bottom of the slide.

Going to slide 42. So, to sort of illustrate how that would work, if I were to have pre-named all of my files with their naming convention, when I go e-File, I will go ahead and click on "Add Files."

Going to slide 43. Again, these documents have all been named per the naming convention for the various documents. So, I'll go ahead and select them to include in my submission.

Going to slide 44. When the files are added, since all of them were named per the naming convention, the system was able to slot them accordingly, as you can see here, for the various documents. Then, there would be no need to recategorize anything and the user will hit "Submit."

Going to slide 45. Assuming nothing is wrong with their submission, users will see the confirmation page with their various documents. And so, overall, that pretty much covers how the individual e-Filing process is being updated in MCReF.

Going to slide 46. This table is a small excerpt of the various documents we will be able to tag in MCReF, along with information on the file definition and the naming convention. And so, the full table of information will be available in the MCReF user manual, which can be found in MCReF itself.

Going to slide 47. Now that we've shown the updated features on the individual e-Filing process, we'll walk through how this works in the existing bulk e-File process. So, as a reminder, if you have many different facilities that you're trying to file for at the same time, you might find it easier to package them altogether and file them all at once using bulk rather than using the individual e-Filing process we just went over to file them one by one. And so, starting on the homepage here, users will click on the "Bulk e-File" tab.

Going to slide 48. As a reminder, this is the bulk upload screen. And even though we are eliminating the need for ZIP files when filing individually, you still need a single well-structured ZIP file in order to do a bulk upload. Everything that we talked about for the individual e-Filing, the new documents, the expanded naming scheme, the warning overall, that will also apply to bulk.

Since bulk already requires files to be named a certain way, the naming scheme was already needed and it's the same as the one we are using on individual. The only changes are the new prefixes for the expanded list of documentation.

Going to slide 49. For the ZIP file itself, as a reminder, we have an example of what that structure may look like on the left image. Overall, the upload must be a single ZIP file that does not exceed 1 gigabyte. The majority of the information on the slide here is for your reference to access later. Nothing is changing in relation to this information. The key thing to note is that each submission folder within the ZIP file needs to include the provider IDs, FYE, and Medicare utilization as shown.

Going to slide 50. Going one layer deeper, each submission folder should contain the cost report material for the specified provider and FYE. The image on the left shows an example of how the overall ZIP file structure may look with each of the submission folders and files within them.

For the system to know which files are which, users will need to do the additional naming of files as mentioned earlier. If you do name a supporting file using the appropriate prefix, you get the benefit of being able to rely on

the new warning, catching missing documents, and you make it easier for your MAC to find the document you send in and speed up the cost report processing by avoiding, you know, more back and forth between you and your MAC to locate needed files. However, if you choose not to follow and apply the prefixes, they will all be categorized as "Other."

So, in the left image, we see some of these additional documents following the naming scheme, such as the financial statements, starting with FS, and working trial balance starting with WTB.

Going to slide 51. Once users select their ZIP file, they will need to select the checkbox, and then, hit the "Submit" button, which will initiate the transmission of the ZIP file upload to the provider's MAC. As a reminder, a bulk upload can be done for providers and FYEs across various MACs. MCReF will automatically send the cost report material to the correct MAC for each provider and that process starts once users click "Submit."

If no issues are encountered which prevent the upload from proceeding, the bulk upload screen will refresh to display a success message at the top of the screen, which indicates that the uploaded files have been uploaded and processing has begun.

It's important to note this doesn't mean that any of your cost reports in the upload has been received yet. This just means that the upload is in a queue to be processed by the system. And users can see the status of the upload itself, as well as the status of any submissions within it on the e-File history page once the system has processed it by clicking on the "e-File History" tab.

Going to slide 52. So, on this e-File history page, this has a table of information and this page is where users can see the status of their uploads and the details of all of their bulk e-Filing submissions regardless of what status they end up in. This page is also useful to see any successful e-Filings that were done through the individual e-Filing process as well.

For this table, each row represents an individual submission that will receive its own status that includes an upload information when applicable. And so, you can see in this example that upload (IV447) has four different submissions that were included in that upload and each one has its own line and status within the table.

Going to slide 53. One of the submissions in my upload is in a warning status and I can see next to it a sort of headline message of the warning informing that one or more documents were identified as potentially needing to be included with the cost report material. And if I click on that warning link, I can see more information for this submission.

Going to slide 54. The link will take us to the status details page, which provides high-level information on the submission, as well as the files that were attached. At the bottom, you can see the new warning listing out the documents that potentially were missing.

If I'm OK with the submission going through as is, I can go ahead and click on the "Acknowledge Warning" and "Proceed" button. And then, as a reminder, you can also release and acknowledge these warnings if encountered across various submissions in bulk on the "Address All Warnings" screen.

However, if I want to address the missing documents or the categorization of them, I wouldn't click the button and I would either rename my files or add the new files and reupload the submission. And so, that takes us through how the new warning will be implemented in the bulk e-File process.

MCReF Home Page

Going to slide 55. All right. And that is the end of all of the new functionality for MCReF for filing both individually or in bulk. And now, we'll be switching gears a little and do a quick system refresher on the other functionality in MCReF. Then, we'll be walking through a few critical pieces of information you want to keep in mind when e-Filing, including some frequently asked questions, then going over some of the upcoming enhancements for MCReF. And then, finally, open it up for Q&A.

Going to slide 56. In general, the information that you'll see on the homepage represents sort of the entirety of the universe of what you have access to. The provider that will be shown here are the ones you have registered in IDM, which have also been entered in STAR. And the FYEs for those providers will be the ones from 2010 and onwards that have already elapsed.

In general, the only thing that will be here are facilities expected to file a cost report. Any subunits of primary facilities or any FQHC, RHC facilities filing consolidated under another cost report will not be present in this table as no cost report is expected for them.

Going to slide 57. If you don't see a row for a provider and FYE that you were expecting, please confirm proper registration with IDM. If you've confirmed that everything on your end is done correctly and you still don't see it in the system, then you can contact your MAC.

Going to slide 58. On the homepage, we have the "Action" column, where you can see the e-File CR link, which is how you would reach the individual e-Filing page, which we've gone over in depth today. We also have the cost report status column, which essentially contains the cost report status for a given provider and FYE, which represents the overall status of where users' cost reports are in the settlement process.

If I click on one of those cost report status links, I could see more information for that cost report on the "View Details" page.

Going to slide 59. So, this is the "View Details" page, where you can see the more detailed information for your cost report. And just as a reminder, the tracking isn't just limited to MCReF submissions, but also, deals with ones done via mail or hand delivered and the information on this page is refreshed throughout each day.

Starting at the top of the "View Details" page, there will always be a blue banner with the high-level information for the specific provider and FYE selected, which includes the overall cost report status that was also seen on the homepage on the right-hand side of that blue banner, as well as the jurisdiction and MAC the provider is assigned to on the left-hand side of the blue banner.

Next, we have a status tracker shown that reflects the major phases that a cost report can go through, including the four that most cost reports undergo – submissions, tentative settlement, review, and NPR. Additionally, we have phases for any reopenings or revised NPRs and appeals when applicable. In this

example, we can see the cost report status is complete in the top right with the relevant information in each of the sections below from submission through NPR.

Going to slide 60. For this example, we have additional information for the reopenings and revised NPRs and appeals section, where those sections are also subdivided into categories of what is open or closed within each. Additionally, if you were no longer part of a group appeal, we would categorize that separately and display that on the screen as well. For any cost reports that either have a reopening revised NPR for an appeal, the overall cost report status in the blue banner would display as reopening/appeal.

E-File Walkthrough

Going to slide 61. Now that we've covered the latest MCReF updates, as well as given a reminder of the homepage functionality, we'll go through the details of the e-Filing process.

Going to slide 62. So, on the "Individual e-Filing" page, as a reminder, the provider and FYE at the top would be based on what was selected on the homepage.

Going to slide 63. From there, you'll select the Medicare utilization level of the cost report that you're filing, and you'll confirm your first cost report submission status. The information displayed is what the system knows about your submission status. And so, there, you'll just make sure that's in line with what you believe is correct, and then, you'll proceed.

Going to slide 64. So, next, you'll go ahead and upload all of your cost report materials using the "Add Files" functionality we discussed earlier. Some materials are going to be required based on the type of provider you are or the Medicare utilization you have selected as shown in the red text discussed earlier.

As noted on the screen just above the table, you should never encrypt or password protect any of the files, either the main file that you submit or files within ZIP files. The system is a secure portal for transmission of your cost report materials, including safe transmit of your PII and PHI. So, do not password protect or encrypt your file.

Once you've attached all the materials needed to complete your submission, you need to read the acknowledgement statement at the bottom of the screen, acknowledging that this is your official submission to CMS and your MAC. Once you indicate your acknowledgement of the statement by checking that box, that's when the "Submit" button will become activated. At that time, when you click "Submit," then the system will perform specific validations just to make sure that is a sound submission.

Going to slide 65. So, the prior slides we went over and covered how you'll submit a cost report. Now, we'll actually dive into the details of the field. As noted previously, we have the provider and FYE value that were selected from the homepage. Then, there is the Medicare utilization, which is a dropdown with "full," "low," and "no" as options to select.

Then, you confirm the first cost report submission indicator. This tells you if the cost report has already been recorded as received by your MAC for the provider and fiscal year end that you have selected. So, it'll be "yes"

if this is your first cost report submission and it'll be "no" if there has been something received. Finally, there is the cost report materials table, which we've discussed at length today.

Going to slide 66. We have each of the different types of cost report materials, which I'll briefly touch on a few key things for these items. But the rest of the information is here for your reference and is also available in the user manual.

First is the ECR, which is the Electronic Cost Report file that was generated from your CMS-certified ECR vendor software that is not a PDF, a ZIP file, or another archived file type. Then, we have the Print Image, often referred to as the PI file, which is the file that is generated from your vendor software that starts with a PI.

Going to slide 67. Next is the Certification Page, which is from your vendor software that includes encryption codes and the selected checkbox with your signature on it. And we'll discuss more about the e-signature in a moment.

Next is IRIS. This is the Intern and Resident Information System files required for teaching hospitals claiming GME and IME fulltime equivalent on their cost report. IRIS consists of a single set of master and assignment DBF file. That's the M&A file.

Finally, we have the Cover Letter, which describes the nature of your submission or if there is anything particular you want to address up front to your MAC about the submission you are making.

Going to slide 68. In general, the system will perform specific receivability validation to confirm that your cost report submission is fundamentally sound. So, there'll be certain checks that happens. And if the cost report submission failed any of those checks, the error will be communicated to you on the screen.

If an error is displayed, that cost report will not have been received by your MAC. So, you'll have to resolve that issue to then resubmit successfully to get a received cost report to your MAC. These are not considered rejections and will not follow CMS's formal cost report rejection process.

If your submission passes all the receivability validation, you'll get a message that your cost report was received, and we'll give you an electronic postmark date in Eastern Time and a unique e-Filing ID for your reference.

Going to slide 69. You can also encounter warnings in the system as well. When you encounter a warning after you click "Submit," a pop-up screen will display, and the system will describe what the warning is. When you get a warning, you can either cancel out or choose to proceed forward.

Some examples of warnings that you can encounter include if you're filing your cost report late. You'll get a warning saying you're filing your cost report after your due date. You'll also get one if you attempt to upload an ECR that was not generated using the most updated software available from your cost report vendor.

And then, finally, there is the new warning that we covered earlier that will notify you of any potentially missing documents from your cost report material.

Next, to submit your cost report timely, you'll need to make sure you do so by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on the date of your due date. So, again, everything in Eastern Time. So, to be timely, you'll need to submit by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on your due date.

As I mentioned, when we looked at the cost report materials table, you should never encrypt or password protect any of your files. The system itself is a secure portal, in particular, for transmitting your PII and PHI. So, do not encrypt or password protect your file.

Duplicate submissions will be rejected by your MAC regardless of how that duplicate submission is submitted. So, if you submit a duplicate submission, the first one received will be the one that your MAC actually uses as your cost report submission. The second one will be rejected the moment the MAC notices that is a duplicate.

Going to slide 70. Effective on January 2, 2019, there are only two CMS-approved methods of cost report submissions. That's electronic submission via MCReF. This is the one we are talking about today, or physical submission via mail or hand delivery.

One thing we talked about earlier is that MCReF can handle the majority of all submissions. But there may be cases where you won't be able to submit your cost report. Even though it is accessible, it may not be receivable in MCReF.

For example, if for the submission you need to submit more than 350 MBs, then you'll need to send that in the mail since the system will only allow you to upload a submission that's 350 MB or less when filing individually. But, in general, that should be accessible as long as it passes all other checks, but just the system would not be able to receive that.

And finally, while the system is generally available and rarely has any downtime, if, for some reason, you're not able to use the system to file based on login or other reasons, you will not be given an extension for system issues preventing you from e-Filing. Essentially, you can always fall back on mailing your cost reports. And so, there really is no excuse for being late due to the system itself.

Going to slide 71. Diving in more to electronic signature, which was briefly discussed earlier. In August 2017, CMS issued the 2018 IPPS Final Rule, which authorized providers to file with an electronic signature of their Worksheet S effective for fiscal year end on or after 12/31/2017. This final rule did not change who was allowed to sign on the signature line of the Worksheet S, but just dictates that electronic signature is allowed based on when that was effective.

CMS has updated all of the transmittals to support e-signature for every MCR form except home offices. So, for the versions that do support e-signature, all you need to do in that case is electronically sign and check the box on the Worksheet S, and then you upload that file tag as the signed Certification Page when you do your MCReF submission.

If you want to use MCReF that are filing on the 28705, which doesn't support e-signature, then you must do both of the following. You need to upload a scanned copy of the Worksheet S Certification Page and have it tag to such when you make your submission in MCReF. And then, you need to mail or hand deliver a hard

copy with a signature signed in ink to your MAC. And that must be received by your MAC within 10 days of that MCReF submission. And just to note, CMS is working on supporting e-signature for home offices in the future.

Going to slide 72. The next few slides essentially cover valid and invalid uses of e-signature. So, this is not an exhaustive list of what's possible for valid e-signature or invalid e-signature. For specifics, you should definitely reference the 2018 IPPS Final Rule for guidance on electronic signature. But we wanted to go over a few examples of what is valid and what is invalid.

Going to slide 73. This is an example of a valid use of e-signature. In this case, what CMS has done is, on the Worksheet S page, they've added a checkbox, which essentially says that you're agreeing that your electronic signature is your legally binding equivalent of your original signature. So, to use electronic signature, you have to check that box.

And then, in this case, the officer of the provider has chosen to type their first and last name into the signature line. This is an acceptable form of electronic signature.

Going to slide 74. This is also an acceptable form of electronic signature. In this case, the officer of the provider that signs the Worksheet S has printed Worksheet S. They then have hand checked the box saying that their electronic signature is their legally binding equivalent of their original signature and they've hand signed the signature line.

They then scanned that document to make it an electronic file. And then, they could include this document, tagged as the signed Certification Page when they did their MCReF submission. So, this also is an acceptable use of e-signature.

Going to slide 75. The next two cases we will go over are invalid uses. In this case, I talked about the importance of this new checkbox that CMS added. The checkbox has to be checked for it to be considered a valid use of e-signature. So, here, since the checkbox is not checked, this is considered an invalid use of electronic signature and would be rejected by your MAC.

Going to slide 76. This is also an invalid use of e-signature. In this case, the officer of the provider has checked the box appropriately electing for e-signature, but they haven't provided a first and last name. They've just provided X123, which is not a valid first and last name or signature. So, this would be an invalid use of e-signature.

Ongoing Outreach and Education

Going to slide 77. In general, this webinar is just one part of a larger effort to communicate information to the group. So, we're going to touch on some other resources for outreach and education.

Going to slide 78. Listed on this slide, you can look back at Change Request 10611 for more information on e-Filing, as well as an article link there. Additionally, you can always go to the CMS website as a resource to learn more information as well.

Future MCReF Enhancements

Going to slide 79. Next, we wanted to touch on planned improvements to the system.

Going to slide 80. As we went over earlier, we have had multiple enhancements in MCReF since going live in 2018. The new functionality covered in today's webinar is the one coming out next. For the ones listed on this slide, this is what will be coming down the pipeline in the future.

And so, some items include enhancements, such as additional information and documentation within MCReF and making it easier to file an amendment without uploading all your files again, logging reopening requests, and one-click access to PS&R summary report.

Going to slide 81, that brings us to the end of our presentation. Now, we wanted to open it up for the question-and-answer portion of the session, where I'll be turning it over to Diane Maupai from CMS.

Question & Answer Session

Diane Maupai: Thank you, Jolene. Before we take questions, I believe we're going to – the question-and-answer session – I believe we're going to have some pop-up questions. Is that correct, operator?

Operator: To ask a question, press "star," followed by the number "1" on your touch-one phone. To remove yourself from the queue, press the "pound" key. Remember to pick up your handset before asking your question to assure clarity. When the line is open state your name and organization.

Please note the line will remain open during the time you're asking your question, so anything you say or any background noise will be heard in the conference. If you have more than one question, press "star" "1" to get back in the queue and we will address additional questions as time permits. Please hold while we compile the Q&A roster. Please hold while we compile the Q&A roster.

Diane Maupai: OK. And while you compile the roster, we'll start taking questions from the webcast. First question is what about home office reports? When will we be able to submit those completely through MCReF?

Geoff Kuhn: This is Geoff Kuhn with CGI Federal, the maintainer. I can take that one. So, in general, for home offices, I think Jolene covered a little bit on one of the recent slides that they are the only type of cost report right now that does not yet support e-signature on the 28705 cost report form.

What that means is that you can file everything for the cost report submission in MCReF if you have registered the home office for the – for MCReF through IDM. But, once doing so, you have to send in a hard copy of the signature to your MAC as a follow up.

So, right now, CMS is working on a version of the home office form that will directly support e-signature, at which point, it will be like all the other forms that can be filed through MCReF and only through MCReF. But, for right now, you can file everything, have it be considered timely and so forth, as long as you then follow up with that hard copy within the requisite number of days.

Diane Maupai: Thank you, Jeff. Here's another question from the webcast. If I want to request approval from an organization, so I can submit their cost report for them, is there a way to search for the organization by provider number instead of by organization name and state, which is how I have to search for them now?

Geoff Kuhn: Sure. This is from the EIDM or IDM side of the house where you're trying to sign up for new organizations, someone, you know, you're working on behalf of or an organization that you joined. Right now, within IDM, the only ways to search for an organization are by their organization name and state or, if they can provide it to you, their tax identification number. And if you're having trouble finding them based on the organization name and state, you might find that their tax identification number is a more direct way to find them.

But, at the moment, IDM does not have the CCN, the CMS Certification Number, or what we are referring to here as the provider number as a search criteria. It's not one of their primary identifiers. And so, we can pass along as something that we think would be viable to the community. But there is no way to search through that attribute right now.

Diane Maupai: Thank you, Geoff. So, next question from the webcast. I currently report our credit balance through NGS Connects. Does this replace that also?

Geoff Kuhn: So, I think for the credit balance report, you can include that with your cost report submission if it's something that you have available and ready, and it will be communicated to your MAC. But it is not required that that be included as part of a cost report submission through MCReF. It's not one of the things that the system is specifically looking for.

If you don't submit it with your cost report, then you should continue following your MAC specific guidance, NGS Connects in this particular case, to submit it when the MAC comes back and requests it from you. So, if you – if you want to include it through MCReF you can. But this is not necessarily replacing all forms of document communication with your MACs.

Diane Maupai: OK. Thank you. Operator, let's take a question from the phone now.

Operator: We have a question from the line of Becky Martin.

Becky Martin: Hi. Good afternoon. I was just wondering, you referenced the MCReF user manual. Did you provide a link to that or can it just be found on the MCReF homepage?

Geoff Kuhn: On the MCReF site itself, in the upper right-hand corner, there is a link today that says "Help." And if you click that, it'll take you to the user manual. When we roll out this change, that link will be changed to say "User Manual" to make it more obvious what's there.

But if you're logged into MCReF, it's directly available. That's the most recent user manual. There is also a copy of the user manual published to the CMS info page for MCReF, but that one might be applicable when we do the new functionality in a couple of weeks. That one might be a little bit behind in terms of reflecting some of these changes.

Becky Martin: Thank you.

Diane Maupai: OK. We'll take another question from the webcast. Are emails reminders – or emails reminders still sent to change passwords?

Geoff Kuhn: I think this goes back to IDM again. So, everything about managing your account and your password and so forth is taken care of by IDM. To my knowledge, they still have the same 60-day password change requirement, and they will still notify you via the email address they have on record when your password is approaching its expiration.

Diane Maupai: OK. Can you please clarify when something would go on the "Supporting Documents" line versus the "Other" line?

Geoff Kuhn: Sure. From the perspective of the system, in terms of an acceptable cost report, they're both equivalent. The – you know, what really matters is that you have identified your acceptability documents, your ECR, and your IRIS, and your Print Image. Those are the things that must be there for the submission to go through successfully.

The "Other" versus "Supporting" is purely based on helpfully identifying the files that you're putting in there, making it easier for the MAC to identify them. So, you – as you've done before, all of those things could be placed in "Other."

But if you want to be able to rely on the warning that the system's providing or were looking at the cost report and saying you appear to be claiming bad debt and we don't see a bad debt file, or you want to make it easier for your MAC to identify the files that you're giving them that helps support the numbers in your cost report, naming them so that they end up as supporting documents or categorizing them after you've uploaded them to say this is this kind of supporting document, it is an optional part of making it clear what you're putting in there.

And so, that's the difference between the two is "Other" is just sort of whatever else is in there that you want to include, and the Supporting Documents is a slightly better organized version of the same sort of content of sort of expected known documents that might be relevant to make it easier for your MAC to find them.

Diane Maupai: Thank you, Jeff. When – why does sign Certification Page not automatically group into acceptability documents?

Geoff Kuhn: I think this is referring back to one of the demos or demonstrations we did earlier in the presentation. The – right now, for the files that are generated by the cost report vendors for the ECR, for the Print Image, for IRIS, those have published known naming standards that the vendors follow. And the system uses those published known naming standards in order to automatically categorize those files.

For the sign Certification Page, what we found is that each vendor kind of does those their own way. And there's also cases where the sign Certification Page is not produced by the vendor. It's just the user going and, you know, like we talked about, they can print it out, they can have someone sign it, they can scan it in, and then, they just name it however they choose to name it.

So, because of that, we have a naming standard that was published as part of the bulk changes that we did in October and this also relies on. And so, if you name your sign cert "SC," and then, like the rest of your ECR file, we will automatically categorize that a signed cert. And if you want to talk to your vendor, if they're producing the sign cert for you and you'd like them to change the way they name it so that it aligns with sort of this universal standard, then the system can identify it going forward.

But as of right now, the vendors do not adhere to a single sort of consistent pattern. And so, the system will place it in "Other" if it hasn't been named the way that the system expects.

Diane Maupai: OK. IRIS disk the A&M DBF files, understanding that CMS is moving away from the M&A DBF files with the upgrade to new software, will MCReF handle the new all-inclusive one-IRIS file?

Geoff Kuhn: Yes. So, CMS is in the process of releasing an updated XML IRIS format that's been published previously as an OMB-approved document. It's still in the process of being made available to use for cost reports. And I think there'll be more information on that later this year. When that becomes an officially supported format from the CMS perspective, MCReF will support XML in addition to its current support for the M&A DBF files.

Diane Maupai: Thank you. Operator, do we have any phone questions?

Operator: To ask a question, press "star," followed by the number "1" on your touchtone phone. To remove yourself from the queue, press the "pound" key. Remember to pick up your handset before asking your question to assure clarity. Once your line is open, state your name and organization.

Please note your line will remain open during the time you are asking your question, so anything you say or any background noise will be heard in the conference. If you have more than one question, press "star" "1" to get back in queue. And we will address additional questions as time permits.

Please hold while we compile the Q&A roster. Please hold while we compile the Q&A roster.

Diane Maupai: I'll take another question from the webcast. Will the new version be available for use with cost reports filed in May 2021?

Geoff Kuhn: Right now, we are in the process of rolling out this new functionality. We expect it to be live in the next couple of weeks in sort of early to mid-May. So, if you're filing your cost report by the end of May or after that, you should have all this new functionality available to you.

Diane Maupai: Thank you. Do you have to categorize the acceptability document? It's just the "Other" document that is not required to categorize, right?

Geoff Kuhn: So, this is correct. The bare minimum that a user must do in order to have something filed through MCReF is to make sure that they have fulfilled the required document for what they're filing and those are all generally the types of things that we categorize as acceptability – the ECR, the Print Image, the signed Certification Page and so forth. And so, if you try to file by having everything in "Other," you will most likely run into an error that this submission needs an ECR because it's a full cost report submission.

Beyond that, whether or not you use the supporting documents functionality or let everything fall into "Other," it is entirely optional. We're just – we've tried to make it such that there is – there is benefit to using it in order to make the entire process smoother to make it easier to see what you're missing and make it easier for the MAC to find it without having to do a lot of back and forth with you and sort of slow down the settlement process.

So, there's no requirement to do anything other than categorize the acceptability, which is basically what you had to do before. You were just doing so by specifically browsing for each one. Now, you do the one browse. The system will automatically identify most of them. You may need to recategorize like the signed Cert Page if your vendor is still doing it their own way. And that's the minimum you would have to do the submit.

Diane Maupai: OK. Let's take a question from the phone now.

Operator: We have a question from the line of Kathleen Watson.

Kathleen Watson: Hi. Thank you. Is it appropriate to ask a question regarding the PS&R or I'm not sure if there's anyone on there for that system?

Geoff Kuhn: We may be able to answer it, I think, depending on the nature or scope and if it's not a good question, we can direct you to a different resource.

Kathleen Watson: OK. Thank you. It's related to the home health PS&R and how it's reflecting overpayments on outliers as large negative adjustments triggering a sequestration adjustment on cost reports this year.

Geoff Kuhn: I don't think we can address that in this audience. What I would suggest at the end of – on the next slide, we got after the Q&A, there is an email address for submitting questions to OFMDPAO and I'd recommend submitting that question there. And we might be able to get you the appropriate resource and the appropriate answer.

Kathleen Watson: Great. OK. Thank you.

Diane Maupai: OK. On slide 33, what are the color indicators of green, blue, and yellow to the left of the documents?

Geoff Kuhn: Sure. Within the dropdown, we have the "Acceptability" and the "Supporting" and the "Other" and the green, blue, and yellow are purely there to make it easier to see what group of stuff you set them in. So, the green dot goes with "Acceptability" and the blue dot goes with "Supporting" and the yellow dot goes with "Other."

So, if you – or have something that's been uploaded and the system categorizes it as "Other," when you go into your dropdown and you say, no, really this is my signed Cert Page, you'll immediately see the color change. And you know that you have now recategorized this as an acceptability document. And then, if you do a re-sort, you'll see that green file then move up into the green section.

So, it's just – it's just there as a visual indicator to let you know that we've – when you've changed the category something is in, you can see where it's going to end up if you do a sort or when you hit "Submit" like which

section it's going to fall into. It has no functional purpose other than just kind of helping you keep track of as you're recategorizing and moving things around.

Diane Maupai: So, thank you. There are no further questions on the phone. And I do not see any from the webcast. Did I miss any, Jeff?

Geoff Kuhn: Yes, Diane. I think there's several more questions in the Q&A queue.

Diane Maupai: I do not – I don't see any more. I don't…

Geoff Kuhn: You may need to click on the folder again just to get it to refresh. I've seen it get hung up.

Diane Maupai: OK. Thank you. Sorry about that, everyone. You know what, if I can't find it here quickly, I may ask – OK, I see a couple more. OK. Thanks.

For amended cost reports, is it necessary to resubmit IRIS and all the other documentation?

Geoff Kuhn: Sure. This is Geoff. I guess I'll take this. For amended cost reports, the requirement is to submit an entire cost report, everything that is necessary to that cost report to make it a whole submission. And so, if you are filing the cost report and it is claiming interns and residents on it, even if you are not changing the interns and residents amount, you would still need to be providing the IRIS file that supports that.

There is – as part of the enhancements that we went over, one of the things that we're looking at doing in the near future is making it easier to submit an amendment, where you're basically saying, "I'm not intending to change anything except this one piece and make that a bit more streamlined." But overall, the requirements that you're – if you're submitting a cost report, you have to submit the whole thing as a package, which all fits together and not just the one document you're trying to swap out.

Diane Maupai: OK. Thank you. What if the financial statements are not complete before or at filing? What explanation should be input?

Geoff Kuhn: The financial statements or the financial statements or justification, as the category is called on the screen, is one of the supporting documents that the system might prompt you for. But because you're doing this type of filing, you would normally have financial statements or justification.

If you do not have those at the time you were filing your cost report, that does not prevent you from submitting. If you truly don't have it, you would OK to the warning and the cost report submission would still go through because at that moment you know that the MAC is going to be coming back to you to get that information once they're – once they have accepted your cost report and they're starting to actually work on the contents of it.

So, if you don't have it at that point, it's not going to prevent you from going forward. It's more just an alert to you that the MAC will be coming back to you.

Diane Maupai: OK. Thank you. We'll take one more question, and then, that's going to be the time that we have. OK. So, if you later need to send files to the MAC without filing an amended cost report, can they be uploaded here?

Geoff Kuhn: As of right now, the MCReF system is only set up for doing cost report submissions. If you have other supplemental communications that you're doing with the MAC outside of the cost report submission, you would continue using whatever means the MAC is recommending and requesting of you for that.

But I think if that's something that you would be interested in doing – us doing as part of the system, then, you know, please include that in the survey feedback to the presentation. CMS is taking those types of requests into account and considering how they want to continue improving and expanding on the system.

Diane Maupai: OK. Thank you, Geoff. So, now, we're going to ask you three quick pop-up questions to let us know who you are and what your experience is about MCReF. I guess the operator is going to need to pop that up.

Geoff Kuhn: I think – one second before we get there, Diane. Just the …

Diane Maupai: OK.

Geoff Kuhn: Next slide here, slide 82 …

Diane Maupai: Right.

Geoff Kuhn: This is OFMDPO questions e-mail address I had referenced a second ago. If you do have any questions related to MCReF or that have come up as it relates to this presentation, especially those that we weren't able to get to as part of the Q&A, you can submit those to that email address and we'll, you know, work to get back to you.

For anything related to your IDM account, the certification or otherwise, EUS customer support can assist you with those. So, their website, e-mail address, and phone number are all included there on the slide.

And I think, from that, that will take us into the quick polling questions that we had. So, I believe if I do "Next," just general sort of question for the group as a whole, whether or not you're already a user of the Provider Statistical Reimbursement, PS&R system.

And then, for those of you that have – if you've used MCReF prior to this presentation, we'd like to know in general how you would rate that experience.

And then, finally, if you don't plan on using MCReF at this point, what most contributed to that decision? What's the thing that is a hurdle for you or something that's making you not interested in using the system? And we can take that back and we can think of how we can maybe work through that for you.

OK. So, you should have those three questions now available on your end to fill in and submit. We really appreciate your feedback on those. And then, Diane, I'll move to the next slide and I think you can take over from here.

Additional Information

Diane Maupai: That's right. Thank you very much, Geoff. On this slide, you'll find a link to evaluate today's webcast. Evaluations are anonymous, confidential, and voluntary. We hope you'll take a few minutes to evaluate your experience today.

An audio recording and transcript will be available in about two weeks at go.cms.gov/mln-events. Again, that is go, G-O, .cms.gov/mln-events. And let's see here. Hold on one minute.

And the remaining questions will be answered when the recording is posted. So, thank you, Owen.

I'd like to thank our speakers and everyone who joined us for today's Medicare Learning Network event. Have a great day.

Operator: Thank you for participating in today's conference call. You may now disconnect. Presenters, please hold.