Hospital Price Transparency TXT File Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Updated August 29, 2024

Q: When must my hospital comply with the new TXT file and footer requirements?
A: The requirements found at 45 CFR 180.50(d)(6) are effective January 1, 2024.

Q: Does CMS provide assistance to hospitals to generate the TXT file?
A: Yes. CMS has developed a [TXT file generator](#) for hospitals to use. The file generated by the TXT file generator meets the content requirements and generates the required TXT file name.

Q: Where can I find the TXT file technical instructions and generator?
A: The TXT file technical instructions and generator can be found here:
https://cmsgov.github.io/hpt-tool/txt-generator/

Q: What do I do with the output of the TXT file generator?
A: We recommend you provide the output of the TXT file generator to the maintainer of the public facing website that hosts your hospital's MRF and ask them to place it in the root of the public facing website that hosts the MRF along with an appropriate TXT file URL (for example, "https://ABCHospital.com/cms-hpt.txt").

Q: What should I name my hospital's TXT file?
A: You must name the TXT file "cms-hpt.txt".

Q: Where should the TXT file be placed?
A: The TXT file must be located at the root of the public website that hosts your MRF.

Q: My hospital has multiple locations, each with their own set of standard charges. According to the hospital price transparency regulation, this means I must maintain separate MRFs for each of these locations. Do I need to develop a TXT file for each MRF?
A: No. Your hospital should create a single TXT file and include within it the links for each of your hospital location MRFs. [The schema](#) describes in detail the required file structure and details on each field, including how to encode separate entries. Alternatively, the TXT file generator can guide you on how to include multiple entries in a single TXT file by clicking 'add' after each entry.

Q: What name should I put into the "hospital point of contact name" field in the TXT file generator?

A: You must include the name of the point of contact(s) you have designated to answer technical questions about your hospital's MRF, and the data encoded in it (for example: John Doe or ABC Hospital MRF Team).

Q: What email address should I put into the "hospital point of contact email address" field in the TXT file generator?
A: You must include the email address of the point of contact(s) you have designated to answer technical questions about your hospital's MRF, and the data encoded in it (for example, jdoe@ABChospital.com or MRFteam@ABChospital.com).

Q: Should we put the TXT file on the root level of a facility page or on a more specific hospital sub-page?
A: The TXT file should be placed on the root level of the domain (for example, at the root of the hospital domain name), without regard to page structure. As an example, a hospital with the website "https://ABCHospital.com" would locate its file at https://ABCHospital.com/cms-hpt.txt

Q: If my hospital is a part of a health system and my hospital hosts its own file on its own website, can my hospital system create and place a single .txt file for all the hospitals in the health system on the hospital system's website or must my hospital create and place its own .txt file on its own website?
A: As indicated in the technical specifications on the TXT Generator page of the Hospital Price Transparency Tools site, and in accordance with the regulation, you must place the .txt file on the root of the domain of the public website your hospital has selected to host its machine-readable file (MRF), without regard to page structure. Therefore, if your hospital hosts your MRF on your own website, then your hospital must create and place the .txt file in the root of the domain of your hospital's website. If your hospital's health system hosts your hospital's file on the health system's website, then the health system must create and place the .txt file in the root of the domain of the health system's website.

Q: May I use a URL redirect when I have trouble uploading the .txt file to the root folder of my hospital's website?
A: Yes, you can use a URL redirect to point to the file instead.

Q: What is a URL redirect?
A: A URL redirect, also called URL forwarding, is a technique for making a web page available under a different URL address. By using this technique, browsers and computer automation will find your cms-hpt.txt file. As an example, a hospital with the website "https://ABCHospital.com" can define a URL redirection such that "https://ABCHospital.com/cms-hpt.txt" will redirect (or forward) a user (or automation) to another folder such as "https://ABCHospital.com/assets/cms-hpt.txt". The specific technical details for defining a URL redirection will be specific to your hosting platform.

Q: How can I setup a URL redirect to point to my .txt file using the specified file name "cms-hpt.txt"?
A: You can setup a URL redirect through your website's content management system. Most content management systems offer tools or settings to manage URL redirects. In this case you would create a redirect from your site at "/cms-hpt.txt" to the actual location of the file, example: https://example.com/files/hpt-file.txt

Q: How can I setup a URL redirect on my Wix website?
A: You can access this step-by-step guide to assist you with setting up a URL redirect on your Wix website.

Q: What should my hospital do to update our .txt file if we update our MRF?
A: If the machine-readable file's URL changes:
1. Mrf-url: Update the URL in mrf-url field to reflect the new direct link to the file.
2. Source-page-url: Often, you may not need to update the source-page-url if the actual webpage hasn't changed and only the URL for the file has changed. Ensure the source-page-url still directs to the correct webpage where the file can be accessed and downloaded.

Q: How should my hospital encode the Source Page URL (source-page-url) and machine-readable file URL (mrf-url) fields in the .txt file?
A: The Source Page URL and machine-readable file URL fields should be aligned to ensure the public's access to the same machine-readable file. In other words, both links should lead a file user to the same MRF:
- mrf-url: The mrf-url field should contain the URL that links directly to the machine-readable file itself. This URL will directly download the machine-readable file.
- source-page-url: The Source Page URL field should contain the URL to the webpage where the machine-readable file is hosted or where a user can access and directly download the file. This URL refers to the page where the link to the machine-readable file is located, not where the file itself is located.

Q: How often does my hospital need to update its .txt file?
A: Your hospital's .txt file should be updated anytime there is a change in the information that is required to be included in the .txt file. For example, if your hospital's point of contact changes, you should update the contact name and contact email in the .txt file. Similarly, when you post a new or updated machine-readable file at a new URL, you should update the mrf-url in the .txt file.

Q: How does CMS use the information I put in my .txt file?
A: CMS uses the information in the .txt file to locate your MRF for review and, as necessary, reach out to your technical representative about your MRF. If you do not keep the information in your .txt file updated, your hospital may be subject to a compliance action.

Q: How can I check that my .txt file is at the correct location?
A: You can check that your .txt file is at the correct location by typing <yourwebsite.com>/cms-hpt.txt or <publicwebsitewhereyourMRFishosted.com>/cms-hpt.txt into a browser and accessing the .txt file for your website.