



## WEEKLY E-MAILING

April 5, 2022

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## **Helpful Links**

### **ACL News & Information**

Here is a link to news & information from the Administration for Community Living (ACL):

<https://acl.gov/>

### **Advancing States (NASUAD) Information**

Here is a link to state technical assistance from Advancing States:

<http://www.advancingstates.org/state-technical-assistance/enhancedtechnical-assistance>

## **News from CMS**

*Kathy B. Miller, Director of Aging Programs*

People with Medicare can get up to eight tests per calendar month from participating pharmacies and health care providers for the duration of the COVID-19 public health emergency. Please see the bulletin below for more details.

### **CMS NEWS**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 4, 2022

Contact: CMS Media Relations  
(202) 690-6145 | [CMS Media Inquiries](#)

### **Biden-Harris Administration Announces a New Way for Medicare Beneficiaries to Get Free Over-the-Counter COVID-19 Tests**

The Biden-Harris Administration is announcing today that more than 59 million Americans with Medicare Part B, including those enrolled in a Medicare Advantage plan, now have access to Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved, authorized, or cleared over-the-counter COVID-19 tests at no cost. People with Medicare can get up to eight tests per calendar month from participating pharmacies and health care providers for the duration of the COVID-19 public health emergency.

“With today’s announcement, we are expanding access to free over-the-counter COVID-19 testing for people with Medicare Part B, including those enrolled in a Medicare Advantage plan. People with Medicare Part B will now have access to up to eight FDA-approved, authorized or cleared over-the-counter COVID-19 tests per month at no cost. This is all part of our overall strategy to ramp -up access to easy-to-use, at-home tests free of charge,” said

HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra. "Since we took office, we have more than tripled the number of sites where people can get COVID-19 tests for free, and we're also delivering close to 250 million at-home, rapid tests to send for free to Americans who need them. Under the Biden-Harris Administration's leadership, we required state Medicaid programs, insurers and group health plans to make tests free for millions of Americans. With today's step, we are further expanding health insurance coverage of free over-the-counter tests to Medicare beneficiaries, including our nation's elderly and people with disabilities."

This is the first time that Medicare has covered an over-the-counter self-administered test at no cost to beneficiaries. This new initiative enables payment from Medicare directly to participating eligible pharmacies and other health care providers to allow Medicare beneficiaries to receive tests at no cost, in addition to the two sets of four free at-home COVID-19 tests Americans can continue to order from [covidtests.gov](https://covidtests.gov). National pharmacy chains are participating in this initiative, including: Albertsons Companies, Inc., Costco Pharmacy, CVS, Food Lion, Giant Food, The Giant Company, Hannaford Pharmacies, H-E-B Pharmacy, Hy-Vee Pharmacy, Kroger Family of Pharmacies, Rite Aid Corp., Shop & Stop, Walgreens and Walmart.

"Testing remains a critical tool in mitigating the spread of COVID-19, and we are committed to making sure people with Medicare have the tools they need to stay safe and healthy," said Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Administrator Chiquita Brooks-LaSure. "By launching this initiative, the Biden-Harris Administration continues to demonstrate that we are doing everything possible to make over-the-counter COVID-19 testing free and accessible for millions more Americans."

Providers and suppliers eligible to participate include certain types of pharmacies and other health care providers who are enrolled in Medicare and able to furnish ambulatory health care services such as preventive vaccines, COVID-19 testing and regular medical visits. To ensure that people with Medicare have access to these tests, Medicare is not requiring participating eligible pharmacies and health care providers go through any new Medicare enrollment processes. If a health care provider currently provides ambulatory health care services such as vaccines, lab tests or other clinic type visits to people with Medicare, then they are eligible to participate in this initiative.

"For the first time in its history, Medicare is paying for an over-the-counter test," said Deputy Administrator Dr. Meena Seshamani, Director of the Center for Medicare at CMS. "This is because COVID-19 testing is a critical part of our pandemic response. Combined with the free over-the-counter tests available through [covidtests.gov](https://covidtests.gov), this initiative will significantly increase testing access for Americans most vulnerable to COVID-19 and will provide valuable information for future payment policy supporting accessible, comprehensive, person-centered health care."

A list of eligible pharmacies and other health care providers that have committed publicly to participate in this initiative can be found [here](#). Because additional eligible pharmacies and health care providers may also participate, people with Medicare should check with their pharmacy or health care provider to find out whether they are participating.

This initiative adds to existing options for people with Medicare to access COVID-19 testing, including:

- Requesting free over-the-counter tests for home delivery at [covidtests.gov](https://covidtests.gov). Every home in the U.S. is eligible to order two sets of four at-home COVID-19 tests.
- Access to no-cost COVID-19 tests through health care providers at over 20,000 testing sites nationwide. A list of community-based testing sites can be found [here](#).
- Access to lab-based PCR tests and antigen tests performed by a laboratory when the test is ordered by a physician, non-physician practitioner, pharmacist, or other authorized health care professional at no cost through Medicare.
- In addition to accessing a COVID-19 laboratory test ordered by a health care professional, people with Medicare can also access one lab-performed test without an order and cost-sharing during the public health emergency.

For more information, please see this fact sheet

<https://www.cms.gov/newsroom/fact-sheets/medicare-covers-over-counter-covid-19-tests>

People with Medicare can get additional information by contacting 1-800-MEDICARE and going to: <https://www.medicare.gov/medicare-coronavirus>. Medicare also maintains several resources to help ensure

beneficiaries receive the correct benefits while also avoiding the potential for fraud or scams. More details – particularly on identifying scams due to COVID19 – can be found at <https://www.medicare.gov/basics/reporting-medicare-fraud-and-abuse>.

Pharmacies and other health care providers interested in participating in this initiative can get more information here: <https://www.cms.gov/COVIDOTCtestsProvider>

**No Wrong Door (NWD) Newsletter**

*Wendy G. Boggs, MS/G, Expansion Coordinator*

The April 4 edition of the No Wrong Door newsletter has been published and can be viewed [here](#).



## UPDATES

### New Online Tool to Get Started Applying For Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

[New Online SSI Tool](#)

The Social Security Administration (SSA) has just released a new online tool that applicants and individuals assisting applicants can use to request an appointment to apply for SSI benefits. This request creates a protective filing date – which is used to determine when an individual can start receiving SSI benefits – as long as the SSI application is submitted within 60 days.

An individual only needs to provide basic information to make the online request. After the individual submits the request, SSA will schedule an appointment to apply for benefits, which will take place over the phone, and let the individual know of the appointment date within 14 business days. "Priority life circumstances" – such as homelessness, a terminal illness, or recent release from incarceration – can be indicated in the application. If one of these priority life circumstances is indicated in the application, an SSA employee will attempt to contact the applicant by phone within three business days to either apply for SSI benefits then or to schedule an appointment to apply.

More detailed policy guidance about the online tool can be found in [EM-22015](#).

### Additional resources from the National Center on Law and Elder Rights (NCLR):

- [SSI Basics Training Video](#)
- [SSI Basics Issue Brief](#)
- [Pandemic-Related Disaster Assistance for SSI Recipients Training Video](#)
- [Practice Tip: Important Change for SSI Recipients and Applicants](#)

- [Social Security Overpayments and Low-Income Clients Training Video](#)

### **Upcoming Information Sessions:**

On April 1 and April 4, SSA is hosting presentations for advocates who would like to hear more about the expanded reopening of SSA field offices for in-person service. They will also provide an update on their new Electronic Protective Filing Tool and their People Facing Barriers Initiative. There will be two separate Microsoft Teams presentations. Please use the information below to join either session.

#### **Friday, April 1, 2022, 2:00 PM ET**

Microsoft Teams meeting

[Join on your computer or mobile app](#)

Or call in (audio only)

+1 443-840-7262

Phone Conference ID: 436 453 904#

[Open Caption URL](#)

#### **Monday, April 4, 2022, 3:00 PM ET**

Microsoft Teams meeting

[Join on your computer or mobile app](#)

Or call in (audio only)

+1 443-840-7262

Phone Conference ID: 603 506 007#

[Open Captions URL](#)

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## **National Council on Aging (NCOA) Boost Your Budget Week**

*Kathy B. Miller, Director of Aging Programs*

**NCOA's Boost Your Budget Week** is an annual campaign to educate low-income older adults about money-saving benefits. From **April 11-15, 2022** NCOA will be encouraging older adults to see if they qualify for benefits programs to help pay for food, medicine, utilities, and more.

[Click here](#) to access an informational toolkit to help spread the word.

# Upcoming Event: Virtual Forum

As directed by House Joint Resolution 542 from the 2021 General Assembly, the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation will host a virtual forum on **Thursday, April 21, 2022, from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m.** regarding the Transit Equity and Modernization Study.

The study team will present an update on its key findings, spotlight new tools developed to analyze the state of transit in the Commonwealth, tell stories from transit riders, and share preliminary action plan ideas. Attendees will learn where the opportunities are to improve transit accessibility, infrastructure, electrification, technologies, governance, and safety for all Virginians.

Attendance is free and open to the public. Please submit questions in advance through the event registration or on the study website at [www.vatransitmodernization.com](http://www.vatransitmodernization.com).

[Register for the Virtual Forum Here](#) |

Anyone who requires an auxiliary aid or service for effective communication, or a modification of policies or procedures to participate in a DRPT program, service, or activity, should contact DRPT ADA Coordinator Mike Mucha at (804) 786-4440 or [mike.mucha@drpt.virginia.gov](mailto:mike.mucha@drpt.virginia.gov) as soon as possible but no later than 48 hours before the scheduled event.

# Healthy Aging Highlights

Information on healthy aging and more from the National Institute on Aging at NIH

Making health care decisions for yourself or for a loved one can be overwhelming. That's why it's important to discuss preferences and arrangements ahead of time so you can make decisions and participate in legal and financial planning together.

Check out this [infographic for tips on how to get your affairs in order](#).

**You may also be interested in:**

- Learning more about [advance care planning](#)
- Exploring tips for [choosing a health care proxy](#)

## **Mandatory 10-Digit Dialing Begins in April for New 757/948**

### **Overlay Area Code**

*Charlotte Arbogast, MS, Policy Analyst*

Monday, April 4, 2022

**RICHMOND** – Mandatory 10-digit dialing (3-digit area code + the 7-digit telephone number) begins April 9, 2022 for Virginians living in the 757 area code region. Local calls made with just seven digits will not be connected. This is the second step in a February 2020 relief plan approved by the State Corporation Commission (SCC) to phase in the new 948 area code. Permissive 10-digit dialing for the 757 area code region began September 11, 2021.

The 757 area code encompasses the vast majority of the Hampton Roads metropolitan area including Williamsburg, Franklin and Suffolk in the west, and Virginia Beach, Norfolk and the Eastern Shore to the east.

In the coming months, the inventory of available phone numbers with "757" as the area code is expected to run out. The SCC approved an **overlay**, which is the addition of another area code (948) to the same geographic region served by an existing area code (757). Beginning May 9, 2022, new telephone lines or services may be assigned numbers using the new 948 area code.

The good news: residents and businesses that already have phone numbers will get to keep them. No one's 757 phone number will change.

Alarm, security, and elevator services and equipment currently located in the 757 area code and programmed to dial only seven digits must be updated or reprogrammed to dial the area code + telephone number for all calls in the 757 area code.

For more information on this topic, see: [scc.virginia.gov/pages/757-Area-Code-Exhaust-Relief-FAQ](http://scc.virginia.gov/pages/757-Area-Code-Exhaust-Relief-FAQ).

# Putting you in control...



Securing today  
and tomorrow

From Acting Commissioner Kilolo Kijakazi,

"I am pleased to announce that local Social Security offices will restore in-person services, including for people without an appointment, on April 7, 2022.

To avoid waiting in line, I strongly encourage people, who can, to use our online services at [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov), call us, and schedule appointments in advance rather than walking in without an appointment. Phone appointments can save you a trip to a busy office. I thank the public for your patience as we work to increase service...

For more information, please  
visit <https://www.ssa.gov/news/press/releases/2022/#4-2022-1>

**Link to DARS Independent Living Monthly Newsletter**

*Kevin Koziol, Director of Independent Living*

The current issue of IL Impact is available here:

<https://myemail.constantcontact.com/IL-Impact-Newsletter.html?soid=1134646283912&aid=0fHAFIKsH74>