

# Understanding the National Provider Identifier

ODS Community Dental is committed to helping you understand the National Provider Identifier (NPI) process. Here are some guidelines and basic information about the regulation and its requirements.

## About the NPI

- A healthcare provider who transmits health information in connection with a standard transaction in electronic form is *required* to obtain an NPI.
- NPIs are 10-digit numbers that are unique to each healthcare provider or organization, and are required by HIPAA for electronic transactions.
- NPIs are random numbers that contain no-coded information about the provider or organization.
- NPIs are permanent identifiers that do not change over time or expire.
- Replaces other identifying numbers currently used in electronic transactions, such as the Medicaid, Blue Cross and Blue Shield, UPIN, CHAMPUS and other certain "legacy" numbers.
- Does *not* replace social security numbers, DEA numbers, taxpayer ID numbers, taxonomy (specialty) numbers or state license numbers.
- Issued by the government through a third-party group, the National Plan & Provider Enumeration System (NPPES), which is responsible for processing applications and assigning numbers.
- All individual healthcare providers (including dentists) and organizations such as clinics and group practices are eligible to obtain an NPI.

## Who needs an NPI?

If you answer "yes" to any one of the following questions, you are considered a "covered entity" under the NPI standard and are required by federal law to obtain an NPI.

- Do you submit claims electronically?
- Do you submit claims electronically?
- Do you use a clearinghouse?
- Do you submit claims attachments electronically?
- Do you use the Internet to verify eligibility or check on the status of claims?

## Value to you and your practice

- One simple identifier eliminates the need to maintain and match identification numbers to specific payers for transactions.
- The NPI allows professionals to relocate practices or change specialties without requiring new identifiers from multiple payers.
- Standardized identifiers will help reduce costs and simplify health care transactions throughout the system.
- The NPI will contribute to a more efficient coordination of benefits.
- Some, although not all, health plans may choose to require NPIs on all transactions.

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## The application process

- 1 Visit <http://nppes.cms.hhs.gov>
- 2 Complete the application and follow instructions to submit either online or by mail. Faxes are not accepted.
- 3 After confirmation of the receipt of your application, you should receive your NPI via email within one to five business days if you submitted the application online. Mailed applications may require up to 20 days to process.

## Report your NPI to ODS Community Dental

- If you have your NPI, check with your local ODS Community Dental member company and ask how they prefer to receive it – by fax, phone, mail or email. Simply submitting it on a claim will not ensure that it's entered into our system.
- Once you've reported your NPI to us, you can begin using it on claims.
- Use new claim forms that accommodate the NPI by providing a specific space for it. This might require a software upgrade.
- If any data related to your NPI changes, you are responsible for submitting an update to the NPPES within 30 days of the change. Examples include a name or address change

## Type 1 or Type 2 – which NPI is right for you?

There are two types of NPIs: Type 1, for individual health care providers, such as dentists and hygienists, and Type 2 for incorporated businesses, such as group practices and clinics.

- Type 1 is for the provider. This is the only type of NPI you will need if you receive payments in your name or under your social security number as a solo practitioner. For practices with multiple dentists, a Type 1 NPI should be obtained for each dentist.
- Type 2 is for group practices, incorporated dental practices or other business entities that are paid in their business or corporate name, or under their employer identification number (EIN).

- On claims, the Type 2 NPI identifies the payee, and may be submitted in conjunction with a Type 1 NPI to identify the dentist who provided the treatment. For example, on a standard ADA Dental Claim Form (#J400), the treating dentist's NPI is entered in field 54 and the billing entity's NPI is entered in field 49.

## Do you need Type 1, Type 2 or both?

Dental office	Type of NPI needed configuration
Solo practitioner	Type 1 only, if claims are transmitted in the dentist's name and social security number
Individual dentist at one practice location	Type 1 for the dentist and Type 2 for the practice, if claims are transmitted in the practice's name and Tax Identification Number (TIN)
Multiple dentists, one practice location	Type 1 for each dentist and Type 2 for the practice, if claims are transmitted in the practice's name and TIN
Multiple dentists, multiple practices	Type 1 for each dentist and Type 2 for each practice with a separate TIN

## Frequently asked questions

### I submit paper claims and don't use the Internet to check patient eligibility and benefits. Do I still need an NPI?

If you do not conduct any electronic transactions governed by HIPAA, you are not required to obtain an NPI. However, ODS Community Dental strongly encourages you to obtain and use one. Having an NPI will enable you to maintain only one unique identifier for use with all payers.

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### How is the NPI determined?

NPIs are issued by the National Plan & Provider Enumeration System (NPPES). The NPI contains no embedded intelligence – no coding that would identify the dentist’s state or license number, for example. It is simply a random number that does not expire.

### How will the NPI affect other numbers I’ve used in the past?

The NPI replaces other identifying numbers currently used in electronic transactions, such as the Medicaid, Blue Cross and Blue Shield, UPIN and CHAMPUS numbers, as well as certain other legacy numbers. The NPI will not replace these numbers: social security, DEA, Taxpayer Identification, taxonomy or your state license, because these numbers are used for purposes other than general identification.

### Where can I get help with the NPI application?

The NPI Enumerator is responsible for assisting providers with NPI applications and updating their information in the NPPES. The NPI Enumerator may be contacted as follows:

Email: [customerservice@npienumerator.com](mailto:customerservice@npienumerator.com)

Telephone: 800-465-3203  
800-692-2326 (NPI TTY)

Mail: NPI Enumerator  
PO Box 6059  
Fargo, ND 58108-6059

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### For more information

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ web page at [www.cms.hhs.gov/NationalProvIdentStand](http://www.cms.hhs.gov/NationalProvIdentStand)

The American Dental Association’s web site at [www.ada.org/prof/resources/topics/npi.asp](http://www.ada.org/prof/resources/topics/npi.asp)

ODS Community Dental’s web site at [www.odscommunitydental.com](http://www.odscommunitydental.com).

*The information provided in this document is for educational purposes only and should not be interpreted as legal advice. Dentists are encouraged to seek their own legal advice about how the NPI pertains to their practices and circumstances.*