

Primary Care First: Applications Now Being Accepted



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Primary care physicians in Arkansas, Tennessee, Virginia, and 23 other states are invited to apply for Primary Care First, the latest payment model by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). Applications are accepted from practices that meet certain basic criteria, like having an electronic health record. Not only are the conditions standard, but the patient count need only be a minimum of 125 Medicare beneficiaries. Patients can voluntarily select you in [MyMedicare.gov](https://www.mymedicare.gov); in addition, CMS uses claims-based data to determine beneficiary attribution. The program is open to physicians in internal medicine, general medicine, geriatric medicine, family medicine, and/or hospice and palliative medicine.

The payment is provided on a “per patient-per month” (PMPM) basis, in addition to a flat primary care visit fee of \$50. The PMPM payments fall into five tiers based on acuity,

ranging from \$24 to \$175 per month. These fees are *in addition* to the visit fee, although it is notable that CMS is placing a small portion – 10% - of the payment at risk. For the first year, the adjustment is made based on hospital utilization. Thereafter, there are five “Quality Gateway” measures for comparison; these include a standard patient experience survey, A1c, controlling high blood pressure, advance care plan, and colorectal cancer screening. Although 10% is at risk, there is a 50% *upward* “continuous improvement” adjustment should performance be favorable. Dubbed the “Seriously Ill Population,” there is special consideration for Medicare beneficiaries in hospice and palliative care, with \$275 allocated for the monthly payment, in addition to an initial fee of \$325.

The application process, which opened on October 24, closes on January 22, 2020. The [application may be found here](#).

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