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potential reward within the glide path than the level of risk and potential reward that the ACO would be automatically transitioned to in the applicable year as specified in § 425.605(d)(1). The automatic transition to higher levels of risk and potential reward within the BASIC track's glide path continues to apply to all subsequent years of the agreement period in the BASIC track.

(ii) An ACO transitioning to a higher level of risk and potential reward under paragraph (a)(2)(i) of this section must meet all requirements to participate under the selected level of performance-based risk, including both of the following:

(A) Establishing an adequate repayment mechanism as specified under § 425.204(f).

(B) Selecting a MSR/MLR from the options specified under § 425.605(b).

(b) *Election procedures.* (1) All annual elections must be made in a form and manner and according to the time-frame established by CMS.

(2) ACO executive who has the authority to legally bind the ACO must certify the elections described in this section.

[83 FR 68066, Dec. 31, 2018]

Subpart D—Program Requirements and Beneficiary Protections

§ 425.300 Compliance plan.

(a) The ACO must have a compliance plan that includes at least the following elements:

(1) A designated compliance official or individual who is not legal counsel to the ACO and reports directly to the ACO's governing body.

(2) Mechanisms for identifying and addressing compliance problems related to the ACO's operations and performance.

(3) A method for employees or contractors of the ACO, ACO participants, ACO providers/suppliers, and other individuals or entities performing functions or services related to ACO activities to anonymously report suspected problems related to the ACO to the compliance officer.

(4) Compliance training for the ACO, the ACO participants, and the ACO providers/suppliers.

(5) A requirement for the ACO to report probable violations of law to an appropriate law enforcement agency.

(b)(1) ACOs that are existing entities may use the current compliance officer if the compliance officer meets the requirements set forth in paragraph (a)(1) of this section.

(2) An ACO's compliance plan must be in compliance with and be updated periodically to reflect changes in law and regulations.

§ 425.302 Program requirements for data submission and certifications.

(a) *Requirements for data submission and certification.* (1) The ACO, its ACO participants, its ACO providers/suppliers or individuals or other entities performing functions or services related to ACO activities must submit all data and information, including data on measures designated by CMS under § 425.500 or § 425.510, as applicable, in a form and manner specified by CMS.

(2) *Certification of data upon submission.* With respect to data and information that are generated or submitted by the ACO, ACO participants, ACO providers/suppliers, or other individuals or entities performing functions or services related to ACO activities, an individual with the authority to legally bind the individual or entity submitting such data or information must certify the accuracy, completeness, and truthfulness of the data and information to the best of his or her knowledge information and belief.

(3) *Annual certification.* At the end of each performance year, an individual with the legal authority to bind the ACO must certify to the best of his or her knowledge, information, and belief—

(i) That the ACO, its ACO participants, its ACO providers/suppliers, and other individuals or entities performing functions or services related to ACO activities are in compliance with program requirements;

(ii) The accuracy, completeness, and truthfulness of all data and information that are generated or submitted by the ACO, ACO participants, ACO providers/suppliers, or other individuals or entities performing functions or

services related to ACO activities, including any quality data or other information or data relied upon by CMS in determining the ACO's eligibility for, and the amount of a shared savings payment or the amount of shared losses or other monies owed to CMS; and

(iii) That the percentage of eligible clinicians participating in the ACO that use CEHRT to document and communicate clinical care to their patients or other health care providers meets or exceeds the applicable percentage specified by CMS at § 425.506(f).

(iv) That the ACO has moved all advance investment payments received during that performance year into a designated advance investment payments account established under § 425.630(e) and the advance investment payments have been dispersed only for allowable uses.

(b) [Reserved]

[76 FR 67973, Nov. 2, 2011, as amended at 83 FR 60092, Nov. 23, 2018; 85 FR 85039, Dec. 28, 2020; 87 FR 70232, Nov. 18, 2022]

§ 425.304 Beneficiary incentives.

(a) *General.* (1) Except as set forth in this section, or as otherwise permitted by law, ACOs, ACO participants, ACO providers/suppliers, and other individuals or entities performing functions or services related to ACO activities are prohibited from providing gifts or other remuneration to beneficiaries as inducements for receiving items or services from or remaining in, an ACO or with ACO providers/suppliers in a particular ACO or receiving items or services from ACO participants or ACO providers/suppliers.

(2) Nothing in this section shall be construed as prohibiting an ACO from using shared savings received under this part to cover the cost of an in-kind item or service or incentive payment provided to a beneficiary under paragraph (b) or (c) of this section.

(b) *In-kind incentives.* ACOs, ACO participants, ACO providers/suppliers, and other individuals or entities performing functions or services related to ACO activities may provide in-kind items or services to Medicare fee-for-service beneficiaries if all of the following conditions are satisfied:

(1) There is a reasonable connection between the items and services and the medical care of the beneficiary.

(2) The items or services are preventive care items or services or advance a clinical goal for the beneficiary, including adherence to a treatment regime, adherence to a drug regime, adherence to a follow-up care plan, or management of a chronic disease or condition.

(3) The in-kind item or service is not a Medicare-covered item or service for the beneficiary on the date the in-kind item or service is furnished to the beneficiary.

(c) *Monetary incentives*—(1) *General.* For performance years beginning on July 1, 2019 and for subsequent performance years, an ACO that is participating under Track 2, Levels C, D, or E of the BASIC track, or the ENHANCED track may, in accordance with this section, establish a beneficiary incentive program to provide monetary incentive payments to Medicare fee-for-service beneficiaries who receive a qualifying service.

(2) *Application procedures.* (i) To establish or reestablish a beneficiary incentive program, an ACO must submit a complete application in the form and manner and by a deadline specified by CMS.

(ii) CMS evaluates an ACO's application to determine whether the ACO satisfies the requirements of this section, and approves or denies the application.

(iii) If an ACO wishes to make a material change to its CMS-approved beneficiary incentive program, the ACO must submit a description of the material change to CMS in a form and manner and by a deadline specified by CMS. CMS will promptly evaluate the proposed material change and approve or reject it.

(3) *Beneficiary incentive program requirements.* An ACO must begin to operate its approved beneficiary incentive program beginning on July 1, 2019 or January 1 of the relevant performance year.

(i) *Duration.* (A) Subject to the termination provision at paragraph (c)(7) of this section, an ACO must operate its approved beneficiary incentive program for an initial period of 18 months

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in the case of an ACO approved to operate a beneficiary incentive program beginning on July 1, 2019, or 12 months in the case of an ACO approved to operate a beneficiary incentive program beginning on January 1 of a performance year.

(B) For each consecutive year that an ACO wishes to operate its beneficiary incentive program after the CMS-approved initial period, it must certify all of the following by a deadline specified by CMS:

(1) Its intent to continue to operate the beneficiary incentive program for the entirety of the relevant performance year.

(2) That the beneficiary incentive program meets all applicable requirements.

(ii) *Beneficiary eligibility.* A fee-for-service beneficiary is eligible to receive an incentive payment under a beneficiary incentive program if the beneficiary is assigned to the ACO through either of the following:

(A) Preliminary prospective assignment, as described in § 425.400(a)(2).

(B) Prospective assignment, as described in § 425.400(a)(3).

(iii) *Qualifying service.* For purposes of this section, a qualifying service is a primary care service (as defined in § 425.20) with respect to which coinsurance applies under Part B, if the service is furnished through an ACO by one of the following:

(A) An ACO professional who has a primary care specialty designation included in the definition of primary care physician under § 425.20.

(B) An ACO professional who is a physician assistant, nurse practitioner, or certified nurse specialist.

(C) A FQHC or RHC.

(iv) *Incentive payments.* (A) An ACO that establishes a beneficiary incentive program must furnish an incentive payment for each qualifying service furnished to a beneficiary described in paragraph (c)(3)(ii) of this section in accordance with this section.

(B) Each incentive payment made by an ACO under a beneficiary incentive program must satisfy all of the following conditions:

(1) The incentive payment is in the form of a check, debit card, or a traceable cash equivalent.

(2) The value of the incentive payment does not exceed \$20, as adjusted annually by the percentage increase in the consumer price index for all urban consumers (United States city average) for the 12-month period ending with June of the previous year, rounded to the nearest whole dollar amount.

(3) The incentive payment is provided by the ACO to the beneficiary no later than 30 days after a qualifying service is furnished.

(C) An ACO must furnish incentive payments in the same amount to each eligible Medicare fee-for-service beneficiary without regard to enrollment of such beneficiary in a Medicare supplemental policy (described in section 1882(g)(1) of the Act), in a State Medicaid plan under title XIX or a waiver of such a plan, or in any other health insurance policy or health benefit plan.

(4) *Program integrity requirements—(i) Record retention.* An ACO that establishes a beneficiary incentive program must maintain records related to the beneficiary incentive program that include the following:

(A) Identification of each beneficiary that received an incentive payment, including beneficiary name and HICN or Medicare beneficiary identifier.

(B) The type and amount of each incentive payment made to each beneficiary.

(C) The date each beneficiary received a qualifying service, the corresponding HCPCS code for the qualifying service, and identification of the ACO provider/supplier that furnished the qualifying service.

(D) The date the ACO provided each incentive payment to each beneficiary.

(ii) *Source of funding.* (A) An ACO must not use funds from any entity or organization outside of the ACO to establish or operate a beneficiary incentive program.

(B) An ACO must not directly, through insurance, or otherwise, bill or otherwise shift the cost of establishing or operating a beneficiary incentive program to a Federal health care program.

(iii) *Beneficiary notifications.* An ACO or its ACO participants shall notify assigned beneficiaries of the availability of the beneficiary incentive program in accordance with § 425.312(b).

(iv) *Marketing prohibition.* Except for the beneficiary notifications required under this section, the beneficiary incentive program is not the subject of marketing materials and activities, including but not limited to, an advertisement or solicitation to a beneficiary or any potential patient whose care is paid for in whole or in part by a Federal health care program (as defined at 42 U.S.C. 1320a-7b(f)).

(5) *Effect on program calculations.* CMS disregards incentive payments made by an ACO under paragraph (c) of this section in calculating an ACO's benchmarks, estimated average per capita Medicare expenditures, and shared savings and losses.

(6) *Income exemptions.* Incentive payments made under a beneficiary incentive program are not considered income or resources or otherwise taken into account for purposes of either of the following:

(i) Determining eligibility for benefits or assistance (or the amount or extent of benefits or assistance) under any Federal program or under any State or local program financed in whole or in part with Federal funds.

(ii) Any Federal or State laws relating to taxation.

(7) *Termination.* CMS may require an ACO to terminate its beneficiary incentive program at any time for either of the following:

(i) Failure to comply with the requirements of this section.

(ii) Any of the grounds for ACO termination set forth in § 425.218(b).

[83 FR 68066, Dec. 31, 2018]

§ 425.305 Other program safeguards.

(a) *Screening of ACO applicants.* (1) ACOs, ACO participants, and ACO providers/suppliers are reviewed during the Shared Savings Program application process and periodically thereafter with regard to their program integrity history, including any history of Medicare program exclusions or other sanctions and affiliations with individuals or entities that have a history of program integrity issues.

(2) ACOs, ACO participants, or ACO providers/suppliers whose screening reveals a history of program integrity issues or affiliations with individuals or entities that have a history of pro-

gram integrity issues may be subject to denial of their Shared Savings Program applications or the imposition of additional safeguards or assurances against program integrity risks.

(b) *Prohibition on certain required referrals and cost shifting.* ACOs, ACO participants, and ACO providers/suppliers are prohibited from doing the following:

(1) Conditioning the participation of ACO participants, ACO providers/suppliers, other individuals or entities performing functions or services related to ACO activities in the ACO on referrals of Federal health care program business that the ACO, its ACO participants, or ACO providers/suppliers or other individuals or entities performing functions or services related to ACO activities know or should know is being (or would be) provided to beneficiaries who are not assigned to the ACO.

(2) Requiring that beneficiaries be referred only to ACO participants or ACO providers/suppliers within the ACO or to any other provider or supplier, except that the prohibition does not apply to referrals made by employees or contractors who are operating within the scope of their employment or contractual arrangement to the employer or contracting entity, provided that the employees and contractors remain free to make referrals without restriction or limitation if the beneficiary expresses a preference for a different provider, practitioner, or supplier; the beneficiary's insurer determines the provider, practitioner, or supplier; or the referral is not in the beneficiary's best medical interests in the judgment of the referring party.

[83 FR 68067, Dec. 31, 2018]

§ 425.306 Participant agreement and exclusivity of ACO participants.

(a) Each ACO participant must commit to the term of the participation agreement and sign an ACO participant agreement that complies with the requirements of this part.

(b)(1) Except as specified in paragraph (b)(2) of this section, ACO participants are not required to be exclusive to one Shared Savings Program ACO.

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(2) Each ACO participant that submits claims for services used to determine the ACO's assigned population under subpart E of this part must be exclusive to one Shared Savings Program ACO. If, during a benchmark or performance year (including the 3-month claims runout for such benchmark or performance year), an ACO participant that participates in more than one ACO submits claims for services used in assignment under subpart E of this part, then:

(i) CMS will not consider any services billed through the TIN of the ACO participant when performing assignment under subpart E of this part for the benchmark or performance year.

(ii) The ACO may be subject to the pre-termination actions set forth in § 425.216, termination under § 425.218, or both.

[80 FR 32840, June 9, 2015, as amended at 82 FR 53369, Nov. 15, 2017]

§ 425.308 Public reporting and transparency.

(a) *ACO public reporting Web page.* Each ACO must create and maintain a dedicated Web page on which it publicly reports the information set forth in paragraph (b) of this section. The ACO must report the address of such Web page to CMS in a form and manner specified by CMS and must notify CMS of changes to the web address in the form and manner specified by CMS.

(b) *Information to be reported.* The ACO must publicly report the following information in a standardized format specified by CMS:

- (1) Name and location.
- (2) Primary contact.
- (3) Organizational information, including all of the following:
 - (i) Identification of ACO participants.
 - (ii) Identification of participants in joint ventures between ACO professionals and hospitals.
 - (iii) Identification of the members of its governing body.
 - (iv) Identification of key clinical and administrative leadership.
 - (v) Identification of associated committees and committee leadership.
 - (vi) Identification of the types of ACO participants or combinations of

ACO participants (as listed in § 425.102(a)) that formed the ACO.

(4) Shared savings and losses information, including the following:

(i) Amount of any payment of shared savings received by the ACO or shared losses owed to CMS.

(ii) Total proportion of shared savings invested in infrastructure, redesigned care processes and other resources required to support the three-part aim goals of better health for populations, better care for individuals and lower growth in expenditures, including the proportion distributed among ACO participants.

(5) The ACO's performance on all quality measures.

(6) Use of payment rule waivers under § 425.612, if applicable, or telehealth services under § 425.613, if applicable, or both.

(7) Information about a beneficiary incentive program established under § 425.304(c), if applicable, including the following, for each performance year:

(i) Total number of beneficiaries who received an incentive payment.

(ii) Total number of incentive payments furnished.

(iii) HCPCS codes associated with any qualifying service for which an incentive payment was furnished.

(iv) Total value of all incentive payments furnished.

(v) Total of each type of incentive payment (for example, check or debit card) furnished.

(8) Information, updated annually about the ACO's use of advance investment payments under § 425.630, for each performance year, including the following:

(i) The ACO's spend plan.

(ii) The total amount of any advance investment payments received from CMS.

(iii) An itemization of how advance investment payments were spent during the year, including expenditure categories, the dollar amounts spent on the various categories, any changes to the spend plan submitted under § 425.630(d), and such other information as may be specified by CMS.

(c) *Approval of public reporting information.* Information reported on an ACO's public reporting Web page in compliance with the requirements of

the standardized format specified by CMS is not subject to marketing review and approval under § 425.310.

(d) *Public reporting by CMS.* CMS may publicly report ACO-specific information, including but not limited to the ACO public reporting Web page address and the information required to be publicly reported under paragraph (b) of this section.

[80 FR 32840, June 9, 2015, as amended at 83 FR 68068, Dec. 31, 2018; 87 FR 70232, Nov. 18, 2022]

§ 425.310 Marketing requirements.

(a) *Requirements.* Marketing materials and activities must:

(1) Use template language developed by CMS, if available.

(2) Not be used in a discriminatory manner or for discriminatory purposes.

(3) Comply with § 425.304 regarding beneficiary incentives.

(4) Not be materially inaccurate or misleading.

(b) *Monitoring.* (1) CMS may request the submission of marketing materials and activities at any time. If CMS determines that the marketing materials and activities do not comply with the requirements of paragraph (a) of this section, CMS will issue written notice of disapproval to the ACO.

(2) The ACO shall discontinue, and require its ACO participants, ACO providers/suppliers, and other individuals or entities performing functions or services related to ACO activities to discontinue, use of any marketing materials or activities disapproved by CMS.

(c) *Sanctions.* Failure to comply with this section will subject the ACO to the penalties set forth in § 425.216, termination under § 425.218, or both.

[87 FR 70233, Nov. 18, 2022]

§ 425.312 Beneficiary notifications.

(a) *Notifications to fee-for-service beneficiaries.* (1) An ACO shall ensure that Medicare fee-for-service beneficiaries are notified about all of the following in the manner set forth in paragraph (a)(2) of this section:

(i) That each ACO participant and its ACO providers/suppliers are participating in the Shared Savings Program.

(ii) The beneficiary's opportunity to decline claims data sharing under § 425.708.

(iii) Beginning July 1, 2019, the beneficiary's ability to, and the process by which, he or she may identify or change identification of the individual he or she designated for purposes of voluntary alignment (as described in § 425.402(e)).

(2) Notification of the information specified in paragraph (a)(1) of this section must be carried out through the following methods:

(i) By an ACO participant posting signs in all of its facilities.

(ii) By an ACO participant making standardized written notices available upon request in all settings in which beneficiaries receive primary care services.

(iii) In the case of an ACO that has selected preliminary prospective assignment with retrospective reconciliation, by the ACO or ACO participant providing each fee-for-service beneficiary with a standardized written notice at least once during an agreement period in the form and manner specified by CMS. The standardized written notice must be furnished to all fee-for-service beneficiaries prior to or at the first primary care service visit during the first performance year in which the beneficiary receives a primary care service from an ACO participant.

(iv) In the case of an ACO that has selected prospective assignment, by the ACO or ACO participant providing each prospectively assigned beneficiary with a standardized written notice at least once during an agreement period in the form and manner specified by CMS. The standardized written notice must be furnished during the performance year for which the beneficiary is prospectively assigned to the ACO.

(v) Following the provision of the standardized written notice to a beneficiary, as specified in paragraphs (a)(2)(iii) and (iv) of this section, the ACO or ACO participant must provide a verbal or written follow-up communication to the beneficiary.

(A) The follow-up communication must occur no later than the earlier of the beneficiary's next primary care service visit or 180 days from the date

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the standardized written notice was provided.

(B) The ACO must retain a record of all beneficiaries receiving the follow-up communication, and the form and manner in which the communication was made available to the beneficiary. The ACO must make these records available to CMS upon request.

(b) *Beneficiary incentive program notifications.* (1) Beginning July 1, 2019, an ACO that operates a beneficiary incentive program under § 425.304(c) shall ensure that the ACO or its ACO participants notify assigned beneficiaries of the availability of the beneficiary incentive program, including a description of the qualifying services for which an assigned beneficiary is eligible to receive an incentive payment (as described in § 425.304(c)).

(2) Notification of the information specified in paragraph (b)(1) of this section must be carried out by an ACO or ACO participant during each relevant performance year by providing each assigned beneficiary with a standardized written notice prior to or at the first primary care visit of the performance year in the form and manner specified by CMS.

(c) The beneficiary notifications under this section meet the definition of marketing materials and activities under § 425.20 and therefore must meet all applicable marketing requirements described in § 425.310.

[76 FR 67973, Nov. 2, 2011, as amended at 80 FR 32840, June 9, 2015; 83 FR 68068, Dec. 31, 2018; 86 FR 65684, Nov. 19, 2021; 87 FR 70233, Nov. 18, 2022]

§ 425.314 Audits and record retention.

(a) *Right to audit.* The ACO must agree, and must require its ACO participants, ACO providers/suppliers, and other individuals or entities performing functions or services related to ACO activities to agree, that the CMS, DHHS, the Comptroller General, the Federal Government or their designees have the right to audit, inspect, investigate, and evaluate any books, contracts, records, documents and other evidence of the ACO, ACO participants, and ACO providers/suppliers, and other individuals or entities performing functions or services related to ACO activities that pertain to all of the following:

(1) The ACO's compliance with Shared Savings Program.

(2) The quality of services performed and determination of amount due to or from CMS under the participation agreement.

(3) The ability of the ACO to bear the risk of potential losses and to repay any losses to CMS.

(4) The ACO's operation of a beneficiary incentive program.

(b) *Maintenance of records.* An ACO must agree, and must require its ACO participants, ACO providers/suppliers, and other individuals or entities performing functions or services related to ACO activities to agree to the following:

(1) To maintain and give CMS, DHHS, the Comptroller General, the Federal Government or their designees access to all books, contracts, records, documents, and other evidence (including data related to Medicare utilization and costs, quality performance measures, shared savings distributions, information related to operation of a beneficiary incentive program, and other financial arrangements related to ACO activities) sufficient to enable the audit, evaluation, investigation, and inspection of the ACO's compliance with program requirements, quality of services performed, right to any shared savings payment, or obligation to repay losses, ability to bear the risk of potential losses, and ability to repay any losses to CMS.

(2) To maintain such books, contracts, records, documents, and other evidence for a period of 10 years from the final date of the agreement period or from the date of completion of any audit, evaluation, or inspection, whichever is later, unless—

(i) CMS determines there is a special need to retain a particular record or group of records for a longer period and notifies the ACO at least 30 days before the normal disposition date; or

(ii) There has been a termination, dispute, or allegation of fraud or similar fault against the ACO, its ACO participants, its ACO providers/suppliers, or other individuals or entities performing functions or services related to ACO activities, in which case ACOs must retain records for an additional 6 years from the date of any resulting

final resolution of the termination, dispute, or allegation of fraud or similar fault.

(c) *Responsibility of the ACO.* Notwithstanding any arrangements between or among an ACO, ACO participants, ACO providers/suppliers, and other individuals or entities performing functions or services related to ACO activities, the ACO must have ultimate responsibility for adhering to and otherwise fully complying with all terms and conditions of its participation agreement with CMS, including the requirements set forth in this section.

(d) *OIG authority.* None of the provisions of this part limit or restrict OIG's authority to audit, evaluate, investigate, or inspect the ACO, its ACO participants, its ACO providers/suppliers and other individuals or entities performing functions or services related to ACO activities.

[76 FR 67973, Nov. 2, 2011, as amended at 80 FR 32840, June 9, 2015; 81 FR 38013, June 10, 2016; 83 FR 68068, Dec. 31, 2018]

§ 425.315 Reopening determinations of ACO shared savings or shared losses to correct financial reconciliation calculations.

(a) *Reopenings.* (1) If CMS determines that the amount of shared savings due to the ACO or the amount of shared losses owed by the ACO has been calculated in error, CMS may reopen the initial determination or a final agency determination under subpart I of this part and issue a revised initial determination:

(i) At any time in the case of fraud or similar fault as defined in § 405.902; or

(ii) Not later than 4 years after the date of the notification to the ACO of the initial determination of savings or losses for the relevant performance year under § 425.604(f), § 425.605(e), § 425.606(h), § 425.609(e) or § 425.610(h), for good cause.

(2) Good cause may be established when—

(i) There is new and material evidence that was not available or known at the time of the payment determination and may result in a different conclusion; or

(ii) The evidence that was considered in making the payment determination clearly shows on its face that an obvi-

ous error was made at the time of the payment determination.

(3) A change of legal interpretation or policy by CMS in a regulation, CMS ruling or CMS general instruction, whether made in response to judicial precedent or otherwise, is not a basis for reopening a payment determination under this section.

(4) CMS has sole discretion to determine whether good cause exists for reopening a payment determination under this section.

(b) [Reserved]

[81 FR 38013, June 10, 2016, as amended at 83 FR 60092, Nov. 23, 2018; 83 FR 68068, Dec. 31, 2018]

§ 425.316 Monitoring of ACOs.

(a) *General rule.* (1) In order to ensure that the ACO continues to satisfy the eligibility and program requirements under this part, CMS monitors and assesses the performance of ACOs, their ACO participants, and ACO providers/suppliers.

(2) CMS employs a range of methods to monitor and assess the performance of ACOs, ACO participants, and ACO providers/suppliers, including but not limited to any of the following, as appropriate:

(i) Analysis of specific financial and quality measurement data reported by the ACO as well as aggregate annual and quarterly reports.

(ii) Analysis of beneficiary and provider complaints.

(iii) Audits (including, for example, analysis of claims, chart review (medical record), beneficiary survey reviews, coding audits, on-site compliance reviews).

(b) *Monitoring ACO avoidance of at-risk beneficiaries.* (1) CMS may use one or more of the methods described in paragraph (a)(2) of this section (as appropriate) to identify trends and patterns suggesting that an ACO has avoided at-risk beneficiaries. The results of these analyses may subsequently require further investigation and follow-up with beneficiaries or the ACO and its ACO participants, ACO providers/suppliers, or other individuals or entities performing functions or services related to the ACO's activities, in order to substantiate cases of beneficiary avoidance.

(2)(i) CMS, at its sole discretion, may take any of the pre-termination actions set forth in § 425.216(a)(1) or immediately terminate, if it determines that an ACO, its ACO participants, any ACO providers/suppliers, or other individuals or entities performing functions or services related to the ACO's activities avoids at-risk beneficiaries.

(ii) If CMS requires the ACO to submit a CAP, the ACO will—

(A) Submit a CAP that addresses actions the ACO will take to ensure that the ACO, ACO participants, ACO providers/suppliers, or other individuals or entities performing functions or services related to the ACO's activities cease avoidance of at-risk beneficiaries.

(B) Not receive any shared savings payments during the time it is under the CAP.

(C) Not be eligible to receive shared savings for the performance year attributable to the time that necessitated the CAP (the time period during which the ACO avoided at risk beneficiaries).

(iii) CMS will re-evaluate the ACO during and after the CAP implementation period to determine if the ACO has continued to avoid at-risk beneficiaries. The ACO will be terminated if CMS determines that the ACO has continued to avoid at-risk beneficiaries during or after the CAP implementation period.

(c) *Monitoring ACO compliance with quality performance standards.* To identify ACOs that are not meeting the quality performance standards, CMS will review an ACO's submission of quality measurement data under § 425.500 or § 425.512. CMS may request additional documentation from an ACO, ACO participants, or ACO providers/suppliers, as appropriate. If an ACO does not meet quality performance standards or fails to report on one or more quality measures, CMS will take the following actions:

(1) *For performance years (or a performance period) beginning on or before January 1, 2020.* (i) The ACO may be given a warning for the first time it fails to meet the minimum attainment level on at least 70 percent of the measures, as determined under § 425.502, in one or more domains and may be subject to a

CAP. CMS may forgo the issuance of the warning letter depending on the nature and severity of the noncompliance and instead subject the ACO to actions set forth at § 425.216 or immediately terminate the ACO's participation agreement under § 425.218.

(ii) The ACO's compliance with the quality performance standards will be re-evaluated the following year. If the ACO continues to fail to meet the quality performance standard in the following year, the agreement will be terminated.

(iii) An ACO will not qualify to share in savings in any year it fails to report accurately, completely, and timely on the quality performance measures.

(2) *For performance years beginning on or after January 1, 2021.* (i) If the ACO fails to meet the quality performance standard, CMS may take one or more of the actions prior to termination specified in § 425.216. Depending on the nature and severity of the noncompliance, CMS may forgo pre-termination actions and may immediately terminate the ACO's participation agreement under § 425.218.

(ii) CMS will terminate an ACO's participation agreement under any of the following circumstances:

(A) The ACO fails to meet the quality performance standard for 2 consecutive performance years within an agreement period.

(B) The ACO fails to meet the quality performance standard for any 3 performance years within an agreement period, regardless of whether the years are in consecutive order.

(C) A renewing ACO or re-entering ACO fails to meet the quality performance standard for the last performance year of the ACO's previous agreement period and this occurrence was either the second consecutive performance year of failed quality performance or the third nonconsecutive performance year of failed quality performance during the previous agreement period.

(D) A renewing ACO or re-entering ACO fails to meet the quality performance standard for 2 consecutive performance years across 2 agreement periods, specifically the last performance year of the ACO's previous agreement period and the first performance year of the ACO's new agreement period.

(d) *Monitoring ACO financial performance.* (1) For performance years beginning on July 1, 2019 and subsequent performance years, CMS determines whether the Medicare Parts A and B fee-for-service expenditures for the ACO's assigned beneficiaries for the performance year exceed the ACO's updated benchmark by an amount equal to or exceeding either the ACO's negative MSR under a one-sided model, or the ACO's MLR under a two-sided model.

(2) If the Medicare Parts A and B fee-for-service expenditures for the ACO's assigned beneficiaries for the performance year exceed the ACO's updated benchmark as specified in paragraph (d)(1) of this section, CMS may take any of the pre-termination actions set forth in § 425.216.

(3) If the Medicare Parts A and B fee-for-service expenditures for the ACO's assigned beneficiaries for the performance year exceed the ACO's updated benchmark as specified in paragraph (d)(1) of this section for another performance year of the agreement period, CMS may immediately or with advance notice terminate the ACO's participation agreement under § 425.218.

(e) *Monitoring ACO eligibility for advance investment payments.* (1) CMS monitors an ACO that receives advance investment payments pursuant to § 425.630 for changes in its ACO participants that may cause the ACO to no longer meet the standards specified in § 425.630(b)(3) and (4).

(2) If CMS determines during any performance year of the agreement period that an ACO receiving advance investment payments is experienced with performance-based risk Medicare ACO initiatives or is a high revenue ACO, CMS—

(i) Will cease payment of advance investment payments, starting the quarter after the ACO became experienced with performance-based risk Medicare ACO initiatives or became a high revenue ACO.

(ii) May take compliance action as specified in §§ 425.216 and 425.218.

(3) If an ACO remains an ACO experienced with performance-based risk Medicare ACO initiatives or a high revenue ACO after a deadline specified by CMS pursuant to compliance action

under this section, the ACO must repay all advance investment payments it received. CMS will provide written notification to the ACO of the amount due and the ACO must pay such amount no later than 90 days after the receipt of such notification.

[76 FR 67973, Nov. 2, 2011, as amended at 80 FR 32840, June 9, 2015; 81 FR 80559, Nov. 15, 2016; 83 FR 68069, Dec. 31, 2018; 85 FR 85039, Dec. 28, 2020; 87 FR 70233, Nov. 18, 2022]

Subpart E—Assignment of Beneficiaries

§ 425.400 General.

(a)(1) *General.* CMS employs the assignment methodology described in § 425.402 and § 425.404 for purposes of benchmarking, preliminary prospective assignment (including quarterly updates), retrospective reconciliation, and prospective assignment.

(i) A Medicare fee-for-service beneficiary is assigned to an ACO if the—

(A) Beneficiary meets the eligibility criteria under § 425.401(a); and

(B) Beneficiary's utilization of primary care services meets the criteria established under the assignment methodology described in § 425.402 and § 425.404.

(ii) CMS applies a step-wise process based on the beneficiary's utilization of primary care services provided under Title XVIII by a physician who is an ACO professional during each performance year for which shared savings are to be determined and, with respect to ACOs participating in a 6-month performance year during CY 2019, during the entirety of CY 2019 as specified in § 425.609.

(2) *Preliminary prospective assignment with retrospective reconciliation.* (i) Medicare assigns beneficiaries in a preliminary manner at the beginning of a performance year based on most recent data available.

(ii) Assignment will be updated quarterly based on the most recent 12 months of data.

(iii) In determining final assignment for a benchmark or performance year, CMS will exclude any services furnished during the benchmark or performance year that are billed through the TIN of an ACO participant that is