

NPI (National Provider Identifier): 5 Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is NPI and how is it used?

The **NPI** is a Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Administrative Simplification Standard and a unique identification number for covered health care providers. Covered health care providers and all health plans and health care clearinghouses must use the NPI in the administrative and financial transactions adopted under HIPAA. This means all individual health care providers, health care groups, and health care facilities must apply for an NPI to be used on all its transactions with health care payers

2. How do I apply for an NPI?

There are three ways to apply:

a. **Online** at the NPES website: <https://npes.cms.hhs.gov/NPES/Welcome.do>

b. **Paper Application** Form CMS-10114 at: <http://www.cms.gov/Medicare/CMS-Forms/CMS-Forms/Downloads/CMS10114.pdf> or you may also request the form from the NPI Enumerator by calling (800) 465-3203, sending an e-mail to customerservice@npienumerator.com, or sending a letter to: NPI Enumerator, P.O. Box 6059 Fargo, ND 58108-6059

c. **Electronic File Interchange (EFI)** – You may agree to have an EFI Organization (EFIO) submit application data on your behalf (i.e., through a bulk enumeration process) if an EFIO requests permission to do so.

3. What is the difference between an NPI and:

a. **Tax ID/EIN?** The Tax ID/EIN is the number issued to a business for taxation purposes. Multiple NPI numbers can be linked to one Tax ID number. An example is a medical practice with 3 providers. Each provider as well as the practice entity will have an NPI for a total of 4, but there will be only one Tax ID issued by the IRS.

b. **UPIN?** The UPIN (Unique Physician Identification Number) was a six-character alpha-numeric identifier used by Medicare to identify doctors in the United States as the predecessor of the NPI. They were discontinued in June, 2007 therefore they currently have no relevance in the submission of any health care transactions.

c. **PIN or PTAN?** A **PIN** (Provider Identification Number) is a unique number issued by a specific payer, for example Medicaid or Blue Cross/Blue Shield, to identify a health care provider, group or facility. These are becoming obsolete in many cases and have been replaced by the NPI on all health care transactions. A **PTAN** (Provider Transaction

Access Number) is an identification number utilized only by Medicare. The individual and group will both be issued a PTAN upon application to a Medicare contractor. While only the NPI can be submitted on claims, the PTAN is a critical number directly linked to the provider or supplier's NPI. The PTAN and NPI are both required when making inquiries to the Medicare contractor regarding claims, enrollment issues, etc.

4. **Where can I look up NPI numbers?**

You can access the complete NPI Registry at:

<https://npiregistry.cms.hhs.gov/NPESRegistry/NPIRegistryHome.do>. This website allows you to search for both individual and organizational providers. The search fields consist of name, address and NPI number if already known. This is a public access website, so anyone can search for NPI numbers. They are not private or confidential.

5. **What is the difference between Group NPI and Individual NPI?**

When an individual health care provider is not a sole-practitioner, the individual NPI must be linked to the group NPI along with the other providers in the practice. When services are rendered, the payment will be issued to the group, not the individual. This is represented by specific fields on the HCFA 1500 form. Based on the **5010** standard, field 24J contains the **rendering individual provider NPI number** and field 33 contains the billing entity **group provider NPI number**.

For more information about the NPI, visit [National Provider Identifier Standard \(NPI\) | Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services](#) on the CMS website.

You may also refer to the Medicare Learning Network® (MLN) publication titled “The National Provider Identifier (NPI): What You Need to Know” located at <http://www.cms.gov/Outreach-and-Education/Medicare-Learning-Network-MLN/MLNProducts/Downloads/NPIBooklet.pdf> and Chapter 10 of the “Medicare Program Integrity Manual” (Publication 100-08) located at <http://www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Guidance/Manuals/Internet-Only-Manuals-IOMs.html> on the CMS website.