

National Provider Identifier (NPI) FAQs

What is an NPI?

A National Provider Identifier (NPI) is a 10-digit numerical identifier issued by the federal government to healthcare providers to submit claims or conduct electronic transactions specified by HIPAA.

NPIs can be 1 of 2 types:

Type 1

Type 1 NPIs are assigned at the practitioner level to all physicians and mid-level providers.

Type 2

Type 2 NPIs are assigned to groups. Under certain circumstances, a group could have more than one NPI to accommodate separate individual offices or ancillaries.

What is the purpose of NPIs?

NPIs are single identification numbers that are issued to by the federal government to healthcare providers to improve the efficiency of the healthcare system and help reduce fraud and abuse.

Who is assigned an NPI?

NPIs are assigned to healthcare providers that submit claims or conduct transactions specified by HIPAA, including:

- Physicians and practitioners
- Physician/practitioner groups
- Hospitals and other institutions
- Laboratories
- Nursing homes
- Dental providers
- Pharmacies
- Medical supply companies

What is the NPPES?

The National Plan and Provider Enumeration System (NPPES) was developed by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to process applications to process applications and assign NPIs. The NPPES also stores information about enumerated providers and applies regular providers' updates.

Do NPIs apply to paper claims in addition to electronic claims?

The NPI regulation focuses on HIPAA compliant electronic transactions.

How are NPIs used?

NPIs are used by providers in electronic HIPAA-compliant transactions identified, including the 837 (claims submission), the 270/271 (eligibility), the 276/277 (claim status inquiry), and 278 (referral/authorization) to:

- Identify themselves and other HCPs in HIPAA-compliant healthcare transactions and correspondence
- Prescribe medications and treatments

NPIs may also be used by:

- Health plans to process transactions and communications with providers
- Electronic patient record files to identify treating providers
- The Department of Health and Human Services to cross-reference providers in fraud and abuse cases



When did NPI go into effect?

Developed by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, The National Plan and Provider Enumeration System (NPPES) was established to assign NPIs to healthcare providers. The deadline for compliance and official enactment date of NPI was May 23, 2007. By this date, all providers that conduct HIPAA-compliant transactions must have applied for and received an NPI and be able to process solely upon it.

What is meant by “enumeration”?

Enumeration relates to the number of NPIs a provider has and the different aspects or concentrations of the provider associated with each. For instance, a small hospital may have once had three separate payer Legacy Numbers for the main hospital, emergency room, and labor and delivery. With NPIs, the hospital has the option to enumerate in the same manner as it had before or choose to enumerate with a single NPI—one number for the entire hospital, regardless of unit or subpart.

What numbers do NPI replace?

NPIs replace the provider identifier, UPIN from Medicare, and all other payers’ unique provider numbers. The NPI is neither designed to replace the provider’s Tax Identification Number (TIN) as these are treated as separate entities.

Do NPI’s ever change or get reassigned?

NPIs are deactivated after a healthcare provider either closes their practices or passes away and are never re-issued to another healthcare provider. However, if a provider is a member of a group practice that uses a Type 2 organizational number for billing, the number will change should they leave to join another group. Deactivated NPIs are reported on a monthly basis by the National Plan and Provider Enumeration System (NPPES).

Do medical students, interns, residents and fellows need NPIs?

According to The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services in compliance with HIPAA, all healthcare providers are eligible for NPIs and may apply for them. As healthcare providers, medical students, interns, residents, and fellows are eligible for NPIs. However, if they do not transmit any healthcare data in connection with a transaction that is considered standard by the Secretary of Health and Human Services, they are technically not “covered” healthcare providers under HIPAA and are not required to obtain NPIs. In all other transaction cases, they must apply for NPIs.