



# Medicare Advantage in 2014 – A Game of Changes

One of the more complicated aspects of the Affordable Care Act is how it will – and has already – affected the Medicare Advantage ecosystem. [Modern Healthcare](#) recently estimated that Medicare Advantage plans will face around \$135 billion in payment cuts over the next ten years, in spite of increasing enrollment rates, making this a key part of the ongoing financial debates surrounding healthcare reform.

While many fiscal decisions may be out of the plan's hands, reports indicate that Medicare Advantage customers are very [concerned](#) about quality, and five-star plans garner significant [advantages](#) over those with a lower rating. Some plans have already started introducing cost-saving measures, such as limiting their field of physicians.

In an environment with a high potential for continued change, beneficiary confusion, and heated marketplace competition, Medicare Advantage plans must be able to communicate and advocate for their offerings and build their star ratings.

A critical element to maintaining a five-star rating is health and wellness member outreach to improve the quality of care. Call centers should be the main vehicle used to contact beneficiaries and ensure they are making timely appointments with their physicians.

A contact center partner with experience in government healthcare programs and the reform environment is a crucial element of any Medicare Advantage communications and enrollment strategy. In particular, it should have the backend capability to report emerging issues and trends that arise to plans so they can proactively address them. In all cases, agent professionalism and licensure are also important considerations.

Regardless of what the future may hold, the contact center will be a major contributor to any plan's star ratings and your HEDIS and HOS measures. The satisfaction and education of beneficiaries is paramount to these measures – and by extension, to plan solvency in the future.

As Medicare Advantage plans prepare and strategize for 2014, enhancing their contact center capabilities should be a top priority.