



Senior Health Insurance Information Program

The Online Recertification System (O.R.S.)

What is the O.R.S.?

The O.R.S., Online Recertification System, is a web-based training tool that conveys Medicare information and then assesses a SHIP volunteer's knowledge of that information. In April of 2005, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services awarded the Iowa SHIIP program a Competitive Leadership Grant to transform the yearly, paper-based recertification that their volunteers take into a web-based process. To accomplish this, the Iowa SHIIP partnered with the Health Assistance Partnership (HAP), a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting the SHIP network.

What does the O.R.S. do?

The O.R.S. provides volunteers with greater flexibility in learning about and referencing Medicare materials. The O.R.S. has significantly eased the administrative burdens associated with training SHIIP volunteers and providing them access to the most up-to-date reference materials. In addition, it affords state-level staff of the SHIIP program the opportunity to identify topics for future trainings by providing them an understanding, both at the individual as well as aggregate level, with what issues volunteers may be struggling.

How does the O.R.S. work?

Because the O.R.S. exists as an interactive website, materials do not need to be mailed to volunteers, nor returned to the state office. All the required materials, including the review exams and all content such as a Volunteer Manual or PowerPoint Presentations, is searchable by keyword and available in one place on the website. The interactive nature of the review interface provides immediate feedback to users; they know instantly if they have correctly answered a question. Users who have difficulty with a question receive a "hint" that links them to the appropriate content in the O.R.S. where they can look for the correct answer.

How does using the O.R.S. benefit SHIP staff?

- Reduces the overall administrative burden of administering training reviews, including monitoring, scoring, and development of the exam itself
- Provides the ability to perform comprehensive analyses of exam data
- Creates an easy way to regularly update content in the volunteer manual and provide immediate access to new information
- Offers an opportunity to identify and correct in 'real-time' any potential problem areas with either the exam instruments, training, or other resources available to Volunteer Counselors

How does using the O.R.S. benefit volunteer counselors?

- Immediate feedback regarding their knowledge in the subject area(s) covered by a training review
- Tiered responses to incorrect answers, in the form of “hints,” that direct Volunteer Counselors to specific reference materials
- Access to up-to-date, electronic, and searchable content such as the Volunteer Handbook (the main reference source used by Volunteer Counselors)
- Opportunity to engage in self-paced learning on subject matter

What are volunteer counselors saying about the O.R.S.?

- *“The format is fantastic. The process has helped me tremendously.”* – Jerry Castonguay
- *“Nicely done. It beats the pencil and paper test all to hollow! I recommend it.”*– Lee Collins
- *“Finished the review yesterday. Wow! Based on what I didn’t know—and maybe still don’t—the drug plan is really a monster. Especially where it involves the Medicare Advantage plan. The online availability is really slick. Congrats to you and your able staff.”* – Wayne Menzel
- *“This went pretty well for the first time. I had a harder time with the Medicare Advantage since this is not really available in this area. Guess the main thing is to know where to find the answers if and when it becomes necessary. Glad this is over since we will be getting into a real busy time.”* – Marguerite Ingram

What is the future of the O.R.S.?

The O.R.S. is owned by the Iowa Department of Insurance and administered by the Health Assistance Partnership (HAP). IA SHIIP and HAP are very interested in making the O.R.S. more widely available to interested SHIPs throughout the network and have developed a cost structure based on the amount of assistance a SHIP wants in setting up, implementing and maintaining the O.R.S., supporting users and most importantly, developing the training content contained within the tool. For more information, please contact Kris Gross, the Iowa SHIIP Director or Rachel Gussett-Williams, Director of National Technology Initiatives for HAP.



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