



# 2020 AEP Overview & Planning Guide

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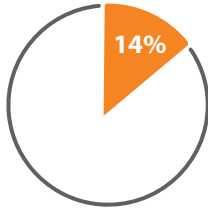
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# AEP STATS



**3 million**

Medicare Advantage enrollees shopped for a new plan for 2020.



That's a big number — but it only represents **14%** of all MA enrollees.



Approximately **4 in 10 enrollees** who shopped around decided to switch.

## WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN FOR YOU?

New rules allow Medicare Advantage plans to offer more telemedicine and non-medical benefits. As plans expand their benefit offerings in response to these rules, it's up to you to make sure enrollees know to shop around for new benefits that could help them.

Source: Deft Research [https://www.deftresearch.com/oep\\_2020\\_wp](https://www.deftresearch.com/oep_2020_wp)

# AEP OVERVIEW

**NOTE:** 2021 plans are released October 1st to the public, however enrollment does not take place until October 15th.

## WHAT IS AEP?

AEP, or the Annual Enrollment Period, is one of the key times for senior market agents. This year, the time period runs from October 15 through December 7.



This is when Medicare beneficiaries can make changes to their Part C (Medicare Advantage) or Part D (prescription drug) plans. Changes will take effect January 1st. Beneficiaries will be locked into their plan until the next AEP or until they have a qualifying event that allows them a Special Election Period (SEP).

## SEP

A Special Election Period (SEP) can occur anytime when the beneficiary experiences a qualifying event.

**Some examples of a SEP are:**

- Move to a new service area
- Qualify for state or federal assistance
- Lose existing coverage
- Plan leaves the service area

## MA-OEP

There is also the MA-OEP (Medicare Advantage Open Enrollment Period) from January 1 to March 31, where beneficiaries can leave their MAPD plans and choose to go back to Original Medicare and elect a stand alone Part D plan or to select a different MAPD plan.

This **does not** give Medicare beneficiaries Guarantee Issue (GI) into a Medicare supplement policy.



# THE YEAR LEADING TO AEP

Many activities throughout the year lead up to AEP. Here's an overview:

**January 1 – March 31** MA-OEP (as explained)

**January – June** Carriers are designing and submitting their plans and revisions for next year to Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) for review and approval.

**July – September** AHIP releases the certification that agents must pass. This is required annually for agents who want to offer Medicare Part C or D plans. Carriers are also prepping and releasing their own certification programs, agents must also pass if they want to offer that carrier's products.

**October 1** Carriers release their next year plans to the public.

**October 15 – December 7** Medicare beneficiaries can enroll in plans.

**December 8** Agents take a deep breath, and then get ready to do it all over again!

COMPLIANCE REMINDER — AGENTS CANNOT DISCUSS AEP  
OR NEXT YEAR BENEFITS PRIOR TO 10/1



## AGENT PREP FOR AEP

While AEP does not officially start until October 15th, agent prep for AEP is an all-year event.

With only 54 days, including weekends and holidays, there is little time to plan or strategize during AEP. This should be done prior to AEP, so all 54 days are maximized for success.

**The following pages outline strategies for agents to consider, modify, and adapt for a successful AEP.**

## Call List

Throughout the year, agents should compile a list of prospects to call. This can include unsold prospects from previous AEPs and during the year. It is key to get their permission (and document it) to contact them during the next AEP to review their options.

The most successful agents go into AEP with 100+ people to contact. Not everyone will still want to have an appointment, but going into AEP with a list rather than scrambling to find prospects will give you a great head start.

A simple excel spreadsheet will help you keep track of who you need to call. However, using a CRM is a far more effective way to track and organize your clients and prospects.

## Current Clients

It is difficult to predict which plans will be best prior to October, as many carriers keep their plans confidential, and do not release details to non-contracted agents.

If you want to retain current clients, contact them regularly leading up to AEP and make sure they know that you represent many carriers. You want them to know that they don't have to go elsewhere if they are interested in looking at other plans. **Remember:**

YOUR CLIENTS ARE ANOTHER AGENT'S PROSPECTS

Mail your clients a letter letting them know that you are available to review their current plan as well as new choices available to ensure they have the best coverage for their needs.

Then hand-address the envelope and purchase a red stamp that says "Important Plan Information" or something along those lines in red to show urgency. Between the hand-written address and stamp, the vast majority of your letters should get opened. REMEMBER, these are your renewals!

If you have the time or staff available, make a follow up call to ensure your clients stay your clients.

**NOTE:** CMS regulations state plans / sponsors (as well as agents) cannot use absolute superlatives (e.g. "the best", "highest ranked", "number one") unless they are substantiated with supporting data. We would suggest using the same caution when sending letters to current clients.

**NOTE:** You cannot advertise 2021 benefits and plans until after 10/1/2020.



## LEAD CAMPAIGNS

Obtaining leads during AEP can be a challenge. More agents are looking for leads, and all the carriers are sending out mail pieces and advertisements, which can drown out mailings and messages from individual agents. This is why it is important to have your own leads either through unsold prospects or current clients going into AEP.

However, if you need additional leads just before or during AEP, here are a couple ideas:

### Carrier Overflow

If you have a local carrier office in your area, ask them if they have any extra leads or need extra assistance enrolling beneficiaries during AEP. Some local offices may have an additional push that year to up enrollment and could use an independent agent to help.

Just remember, their leads should only be used for their products. Selling other carriers with those leads could damage the relationship you have with that carrier and prevent any future leads.

### Seminars

Besides lead overflow, carriers may have some seminar opportunities for you as well. Offer to perform these seminars for the carrier. Remember that CMS has very strict rules about performing Medicare Part C and D seminars. This year, you will also need to consider social distancing rules in your area. See how you can create safe events, including virtual events. Your local carrier should inform you of these regulations.

### Internet Leads

While internet leads may be the quickest way to acquire leads, remember that this is the main season for agents and carriers who work the Medicare market to sell. This is also a prime season for independent call centers to maximize their sales. Basically, the odds are stacked against an individual agent. This is why planning all year to develop an AEP strategy is critical.

As mentioned, internet leads are convenient, because there is no lag time waiting for Business Reply Cards (BRC) or other mailers. However, contacting the prospect as quickly as possible is essential to turning internet leads into an appointment.

## Door to Door

Door to door or unsolicited contact to Medicare beneficiaries is **against CMS regulations** for Medicare Part C and D plans.

You may go door to door for Medicare Supplement sales (depending on your state's regulations).

## Referrals from Clients & Prospects

Referrals are essential to success in most any sales career. With AEP, your clients and prospects will more than likely have family and friends who have to review their Medicare coverage. This poses a great opportunity for referrals.

Make the process easy. According to a recent study published by the [Kaiser Family Foundation](#), many Medicare beneficiaries will not change plans because they found the initial enrollment very confusing and complex, and do not want to repeat the process.

### Thank you notes

After each appointment, send clients a hand written thank you card with a few extra business cards. A simple note thanking them for their time, a personal sentence, and your phone number can go a long way.

**Tell all your prospects and clients that you are open to referrals.**

#### An example:

"If you have any family or friends who would like a quick review of their coverage, please pass them my information. They only have until December 7th and I can make the Medicare Insurance selection process as easy and painless for them as I have for you."



#### Example:

Mr. Client,

Thank you for allowing me to assist you with your insurance needs. I hope you enjoy your vacation to Texas over the holidays. If you or anyone you know has questions, please let me know!

Thanks — Mike (555) 555-1212

This card takes about 2 minutes to write. Most people don't get handwritten thank you cards, so this will stand out from other pieces of mail.

## BRC and Other Mailers

Many agents will use Business Reply Cards (BRC) and other mailers for lead generation throughout the year.

If you plan to do a mailing just before or during AEP, work with your FMO to ensure your mailer is compliant.

If you use a mail piece to generate Medicare Part C or D leads, the mailer must be CMS approved and a copy sent in with the Scope Of Appointment (SOA) form.

## Referrals from other professionals

**Working with other professionals can help build referrals. While these relationships take time to build, they are worth pursuing. Reach out to:**

- P&C agents
- Estate planning attorneys
- Tax professionals
- Insurance agents who specialize in group coverage or under 65
- Financial Planners
- Banks / Credit Unions

You can also offer to do generic Medicare or healthcare presentations at local events like Chamber of Commerce meetings, Rotary Club, churches / parishes etc. While your target audience may not be in front of you, they probably have family or friends they can pass your information along to. Stress the importance of the December 7th AEP deadline.

## Tracking Activity

The most important thing you can do during AEP or any other time during the year is to keep your sales pipeline full of prospects.

Just as important is to track your results. Don't just keep busy, keep productive.



# SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is used more and more by people over 65. As the chart illustrates, 62% of people over 65 are using Facebook.

Being on Facebook is a great way to keep in touch with clients, reach out to prospects, and give yourself an online presence.

## What to do:

- Create a Facebook Page for your agency
- Not sure how to make a page? [CLICK HERE](#)
- Post at least three times a week — useful or interesting topics — we can help you with this!
- Invite your friends / clients / prospects to like your page
- Keep active and keep being seen online!



## 79% of online adults (68% of all Americans) use Facebook

*% of online adults who use Facebook*

All online adults	79%
Men	75%
Women	83%
18-29	88%
30-49	84%
50-64	72%
65+	62%
High school degree or less	77%
Some college	82%
College	79%
Less than \$30K/year	84%
\$30K-\$49,999	80%
\$50K-\$74,999	75%
\$75,999+	77%
Urban	77%
Suburban	82%
Rural	79%

Note: Race/ethnicity breaks not shown due to sample size.

Source: Survey conducted March 7–April 4, 2016 “Social Media Update 2016”

Pew Research Center

# ACTION PLAN

Now that you have an idea of marketing and strategies for AEP, it's time to make your own action plan.

## 8 STEPS TO AEP SUCCESS

STEP  
1

Break down your book of business by product and carrier type. This will help you quickly identify clients who may need to change plans depending on which plans are exiting the area or experiencing major changes in benefits.

STEP  
2

Organize all your current prospects (Medicare beneficiaries you have met previously who have not purchased a policy through you). Get ready to call them after October 1st to follow-up, provided you have permission to contact them.

STEP  
3

Certify for everything the carrier offers. Remember that you are certifying for 2021, not just AEP. Put yourself in a position to say "yes" to opportunities. Certification usually starts late June or July (depending on the carrier).

STEP  
4

Order supplies.

STEP  
5

Organize any marketing campaigns you want to perform during AEP. Have those tested and approved prior to October 1st so you can launch on time.

STEP  
6

Use letters and emails to inform your clients of market changes and to let them know that you are available to help them review and compare all the options available.

**NOTE:** You cannot market AEP until after October 1st.

STEP  
7

After the letters are mailed, follow up with a phone call. Remember, senior's mailboxes are filled with advertisements. While many may see and read your letter, a phone call will ensure a higher chance of them taking action.

STEP  
8

Keep your website, blog, and social media up-to-date, especially during AEP!

**BONUS:** Remember to let clients know you're there to help their family and friends as well!

# WESTERN ASSET PROTECTION (WAP): Where Agents Power-up

WAP outfits agents throughout the U.S. to grow and succeed in Medicare Advantage and Supplement products. WAP empowers agents with world-class training, cutting-edge technology and an unparalleled experience. In fact, WAP is so confident in the quality of services offered that it operates with a free release policy. WAP hosts WAPCon each year for agents — the most informative and innovative Medicare conference in the nation. The firm also hosts a 2-day Medicare Academy agent training in locations around the country. It's no wonder that WAP has earned a 5-star rating from agents on both Facebook and Google.

**Agents: Why wait? Go to [westernassetprotection.com](http://westernassetprotection.com) today to power-up your success strategy!**

## OTHER KEY ADVANTAGES OF WORKING WITH WAP



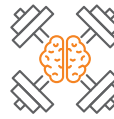
### SUPPORT

High energy team of licensed professionals who are AHIP-certified and product-trained



### BEST PRODUCTS

A broad suite of quality carriers with competitive health plans



### TRAINING

Monthly product training to educate agents on products and sales tools



### CAREER

Countless professional development opportunities



### INFORMATION

Mobile-optimized website with agent portal and mobile-app



### PRIVILEGES

Offices, meeting and training rooms for agents' professional convenience



### MOTIVATION

Performance recognition, community involvement and social networking events



### AUTONOMY

Contracts that support agent autonomy and entrepreneurialism

## PRODUCTS

Medicare

Medicare Advantage

Final Expense

Hospital Indemnity

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