

Understanding CMS Data: An Overview of EDB, MMA, Buy-In, and TBQ Files

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) make many Medicare data files available to states at no cost to support states' coordination of the dually eligible population through data exchange and database queries.ⁱ This overview focuses on the following CMS data files and the similarities and differences among them:

- Enrollment Database (EDB) File.
- Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act (MMA) File Exchange.ⁱⁱ
- Territory Beneficiary Query (TBQ) File.
- Buy-In File Exchange.

1. What is...

a. The EDB File?

The EDB File is a query process that CMS offers to states and territories under which the state/territory submits a “finder file” of beneficiaries for query. CMS then issues a “response file,” which includes Medicare Parts A and B eligibility and enrollment data on the queried beneficiaries. States and territories may query CMS daily for Medicare beneficiary eligibility determination.ⁱⁱⁱ

b. The MMA File?

The MMA File Exchange is the state's data exchange that provides current information on updated full-benefit, dually eligible and partial-benefit, dually eligible beneficiary status (i.e., those who get Medicaid help with Medicare premiums, often for cost-sharing). The state sends data on the MMA File to the CMS Medicare Beneficiary Database (MBD). For each “request file” received from the state, the MBD generates an MMA Response File. Although states are required to exchange data monthly, states can exchange data as frequently as daily. For more information on the benefits to exchanging data daily, see [here](#).^{iv}

c. The TBQ File?

The TBQ File is a query process that CMS offers to states and territories under which the state/territory submits a “finder file” of beneficiaries for query. CMS then issues a “response file,” which includes Medicare Parts A, B, C, and D eligibility and enrollment data on the queried beneficiaries. The Medicare data included in the TBQ Response File pulls from the same database as the CMS MMA Response File but on an ad hoc basis. States and territories may query CMS daily for Medicare beneficiary eligibility determination.

d. The Buy-In File?

States submit files to the CMS third-party system (TPS) to identify individuals dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid for whom the state will pay Parts A and/or B premiums (“buy-in”). On a daily basis, TPS updates the EDB to record all state Medicaid recipients enrolled in, or being enrolled in, Medicare due to state buy-in. In turn, TPS responds to state submissions and proactively transmits updates from CMS and the Social Security Administration to states. This daily exchange may trigger updates in either or both systems concerning buy-in enrollment, Medicare enrollment, and premium billing.

2. How are the MMA File and TBQ File different?

For states, the main difference between the MMA File and TBQ File is that the MMA File is an operational data exchange between CMS and a state to establish dual-beneficiary status and confirm eligibility and enrollment. The TBQ File is an elective, ad hoc query process offered to states and territories for the same MBD data.

Territories do not participate in the MMA File Exchange; territories instead identify low-income beneficiaries and establish low-income subsidy status for Medicare Part D risk adjustment via the Puerto Rico Dually Eligibles file (also known as the Low Income Territory File. For more information, see the [Medicare Advantage Prescription Drug State User Guide](#)).

3. How are the Buy-In File and EDB File different?

A large difference between the EDB File and Buy-In File is that the Buy-In File is an operational data exchange for states and territories that supports state/territory, CMS, and Social Security Administration premium billing. Although both files interact with the CMS Enrollment Database, the EDB File is an ad hoc query that only returns Medicare Parts A and B entitlement and enrollment. The Buy-In File is an operational data exchange on beneficiaries’ Medicare Part A and B premiums and is used to support the collection of premiums and enrollment functions.

4. How are the data in the EDB File and TBQ File different?

Both the EDB File and TBQ File are data queries of a CMS database for beneficiary eligibility and enrollment data. These files query different databases, however: The EDB File queries the CMS EDB, while the TBQ File queries the CMS MBD. EDB File data are limited to only Medicare Parts A and B, while the TBQ File contains Medicare Parts A, B, C, and D data and a robust amount of additional entitlement data (listed in the [Medicare Advantage Prescription Drug State User Guide](#)). Currently, there is a size limit to the TBQ finder file; the EDB File does not have such a limit.

5. What files are available to territories?

Territories may participate in the TBQ File, Buy-In Exchange, and/or the EDB File. Territories do not participate in the MMA File Exchange.

6. Are the files operational or elective?

The MMA File Exchange is operational for states (territories do not participate in the MMA File Exchange). The Buy-In File Exchange is operational for states and territories. The TBQ File and EDB File are elective queries; use and schedule of the queries is up to the state/territory.

7. What is the difference between a data exchange and a data query?

A “data exchange” refers to the process where a Medicaid agency sends data to CMS; CMS processes, retains, and uses the data; and CMS sends data to the Medicaid agency for the agency to retain and use. Under a data exchange, both CMS and the Medicaid agency send and receive data for their respective use.

A “data query” refers to the process by which a Medicaid agency can request specific data from a CMS database via a “finder file.” The Medicaid agency retains and uses the CMS data; under a data query process, however, CMS does not retain or use the data from the Medicaid agency’s finder file.

Table 1 provides a high-level overview of who, what, where, and how the different files obtain information.

Table 1. CMS Files Overview

File Element	MMA	Buy-In	EDB	TBQ
Data Exchange vs. Data Query	Exchange	Exchange	Query	Query
Operational vs. Elective	Operational	Operational	Elective	Elective
States/Territories Eligible	States	States and Territories	States and Territories	States and Territories
CMS Database	CMS MBD	CMS EDB	CMS EDB	CMS MBD
Medicare Parts Included	A, B, C, D	A, B	A, B	A, B, C, D

Table 2 provides further detail on the information provided in each file to help states identify Medicare eligibility within their population.

Table 2. CMS Files That Provide Data on Medicare Eligibility

File Element	MMA	Buy-In	EDB	TBQ
Beneficiary Name	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Beneficiary Address	No	Mailing	Mailing	Mailing and residence
Date of Birth	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Health Insurance Claim Number (HICN), Medicare Beneficiary Identifier (MBI), Social Security Number (SSN)	HICN, MBI, SSN	HICN, SSN	HICN, MBI, SSN	HICN, MBI, SSN
Part A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Part B	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

File Element	MMA	Buy-In	EDB	TBQ
Part C	Yes (includes Special Need Plan indicator)	No	No	Yes (includes Special Need Plan indicator)
Part D	Yes	No	No	Yes
Date of Disability	No	No	Yes	No
Dual-Eligibility Status	Qualified Medicare beneficiaries, specified low-income Medicare beneficiaries, qualifying individuals, and other fully dually eligible beneficiaries.	Qualified Medicare beneficiaries, specified low-income Medicare beneficiaries, qualifying individuals, and other fully dually eligible beneficiaries.	No	Qualified Medicare beneficiaries, specified low-income Medicare beneficiaries, qualifying individuals, and other fully dually eligible beneficiaries.

Requesting CMS Data: Questions About New Data Queries or Existing Data Queries

CMS is not adding new states or territories to the EDB File process. However, if you have questions about your existing EDB File query, please contact the [State Data Resource Center \(SDRC\)](#).

If you would like information regarding your TBQ File or would like to set up a new TBQ File, please contact [SDRC](#).

NOTE: As the MMA File Exchange is operational, all states have an MMA File exchange in place. Please contact [SDRC](#) or the [CMS Medicare Advantage Prescription Drug Help Desk](#) for assistance.

Resources

In 2011, CMS established SDRC to provide support, assistance, and guidance to states on how to request, access, and use Medicare data provided by CMS to support their dually eligible beneficiaries. The SDRC team consists of data experts who provide states with information and resources to help support their use of Medicare data for Medicare–Medicaid care coordination and program integrity purposes. States can locate SDRC resources on the SDRC website (<http://www.StateDataResourceCenter.com>) or submit questions by phone at (877) 657-9889 or by email at SDRC@Econometricalnc.com.

- For more information on:
 - MMA File Exchange, please visit the [CMS MMA page](#).
 - Buy-In File Exchange, please contact DPBCStateBuy-in@cms.hhs.gov.
 - TBQ File, please visit the [CMS TBQ page](#).
 - EDB File, contact the [SDRC](#).

- For technical help with the MMA File Exchange, Buy-In File Exchange, TBQ File, and/or EDB File, please contact the [Medicare Advantage Prescription Drug Help Desk](#).
- For questions regarding your CMS data agreement, status of exchanges and queries for your state/territory, or understanding the data in these files, please contact [SDRC](#).

ⁱ Beneficiaries eligible for both Medicare and Medicaid are known as “dually eligible beneficiaries” or “dually eligible individuals.”

ⁱⁱ The “MMA File” is named after the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement and Modernization Act of 2003, and is also referred to as the “State Phasedown File.” MMA corrected a major gap in Medicare drug coverage for seniors and young persons with disabilities and redesigned the managed care program Medicare Advantage.

ⁱⁱⁱ CMS. (2019). *Data Disclosures and Data Use Agreements: States*. Retrieved from <https://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Files-for-Order/Data-Disclosures-Data-Agreements/States.html>.

^{iv} CMS. (2019, August). *State Medicare Modernization Act (MMA) File of Dual Eligible Beneficiaries Q&A*. Retrieved from http://statedataresourcecenter.com/assets/files/MMA_QA.pdf.