CE Provider Call Talking Points
Transition to new CE Provider System and Blackout Period
September 8, 9, 12, 13, 2016

On 09/01/16 we sent a message to all providers announcing that the IRS is in the process of transitioning to a new on-line CE Provider System. There will be a short period where no CE Provider system is available. The message stated that we anticipated the new system would launch on September 19, 2016. However, we've now revised the launch date to October. From September 14 until the new system launches, you will not be able to edit account information, get new program numbers, report PTIN records, or access your account in the current system. Please watch www.irs.gov/taxpros/ce for updates on the availability of the system.

Should you have questions during the transition or black out period, including the immediate need for program numbers or PTIN reporting, please send them to rpo.ce@irs.gov.

New CE Provider System – Page 1

Please refer to the **draft** screenshots.

The new CE system website address will be ceprovider.us. Please bookmark this page for future use. When the new system goes live, you will sign in using your current User ID, but you will be required to get a new temporary password and set up your secret question/answer the first time you login. You will then be required to change your temporary password and create a new one.

Provider homepage -Page 1

On the main menu there will be a navigation panel with quick links on the left side: Provider Account, Public Listing, Administrative POCs, Programs, PTIN Upload, etc.

There will be a News and Alerts section in the center at the top of the screen and this is where we will post important information you need to know, such as the opening of renewal season, the announcement that the new AFTR course outline is available, or any important information you need to review.

Below News and Alerts, will be the Provider Registrations section and this is where you can view and print your applications/renewals, see the status of each year's application, and access payment receipts.

Below Provider Registrations, you will see your secure mailbox. You will be able to send messages to the IRS and receive responses through your secure mailbox. This will be helpful concerning PTIN uploads or questions regarding account specific information where PII is included and cannot be sent via regular email. This feature should be available when we launch in early October. These questions will go directly to IRS RPO employees just like they do currently when you send your questions to rpo.ce@irs.gov. This is just a secure way to transfer data, but the rpo.ce@irs.gov e-mail address will still be available.

Another helpful feature is that messages will be archived by year and you will be able to filter by year and sort your messages. Per our record retention requirement of 5 years, you will not be able to delete any of the messages. The CE team will manage this and we will try to delete messages that are not required to be retained per our record retention policy.

Lastly, there will be links in the Resources and Help section on the right side of your screen such as: System User Help Guide, Word Count Formula, PTIN Upload Template, Provider Standards, C230, and FAQs. Should you see any links or documents not available that would be helpful to have at your fingertips, please e-mail rpo.ce@irs.gov and we'll add them.

Renewals

Renewals in the new system will look very similar to the current process. Your current list of approved programs will be displayed and you will need to decide to “continue using”, “edit program” or “do not retain”. If you choose to “continue using”, you will carry over a program exactly the way it is into 2017. If you choose “edit program”, you can edit the program title, change the program description, program category, such as changing a 2016 update program to a 2017 federal tax program, or change the credit hours. Editing an existing program will result in a new program number. If you choose “do not retain”, the program will not be carried over into the upcoming year. The 2017 annual fee will be $565.00 and we anticipate the 2017 renewal season opening in early November. On the main page, you will see a "Renewals Open" and a "renew now" button at the left hand side of the screen when renewals are launched.

Points of Contact – Page 2

One thing we've heard from you since the beginning is that you would like to have multiple Points of Contact (POC). Therefore, we have created two different POC roles: 1. A single Principal Point of Contact (PPOC), and 2. One or more Administrative Point(s) of Contact (APOC) per account.

Definitions of the POCs are on page 2 of the sample screenshots.

Principal Point of Contact’s permissions and responsibilities:

- A PPOC can change anything on the provider application, including changing their own POC information (e-mail, etc.) and deleting/adding APOCs
- They will receive all communications and be able to view all messages in secure mailbox – both general and restricted information (review, denial, or revocation/appeal e-mails)
- They can add programs and upload PTINs
- They can delete programs and incorrect/duplicate PTINs

- They can send messages to the IRS and receive responses in their secure mailbox
- They will be responsible for renewing IRS approved status annually
- The PPOC must be the one to submit a new application or reapply if IRS Approved status lapses
- The PPOC must submit and respond to an appeal of denial and/or revocation
- The PPOC can edit anything on the application, except change the EIN or Provider Name (or edit program information as we've specified – once program is created, only add/delete audience/delivery method)
- A PPOC can assign a new PPOC and then deactivate their own account.

All Points of Contact will use their current User ID to access the new system, but we do not store passwords, so you will be automatically prompted to create a new password when you log in for the first time. If you are the PPOC for multiple accounts, you will need to have SEPARATE user IDs/passwords. If you currently manage multiple accounts and have the same user ID (but different password), please e-mail rpo.ce@irs.gov to let us know. We think most of you have separate user IDs currently.

Administrative Point of Contact permissions and responsibilities:

The system will restrict what an APOC can do, but it is up to the PPOC to communicate to the APOC what actions they are allowed to take on behalf of the PPOC if the responsibility is to be further restricted by your company.

- APOCs can change only their POC contact and login information
- They can add programs and upload PTINs
- They can delete programs and incorrect/duplicate PTINs
- They can see Provider information on the application, but cannot edit (read only)
- They can see general secure e-mails, but not restricted messages (review, denial, or revocation/appeal e-mails)
- They can send secure e-mail messages to and receive messages from the IRS

The new CE Provider system allows there to be more than one APOC per account. The PPOC will enter the information (name, address, phone numbers and email) for each APOC, and then a system generated email will be sent to each Admin POC with instructions on how to set up their login in and create a password for the account. This ensures everyone has their own login that is designated by the PPOC. As a reminder, the PPOC will have to enter this general information about each APOC and then the APOC will need to set up their login information after receiving the e-mail.

The set-up page for the PPOC is on page 3 of the sample screenshots and on page 4 for the APOC.

<u>Programs- Page 5</u>

You will find a listing of your currently approved programs on the Program page. Your programs will also be archived by year. You can add programs for the current calendar year on this page by selecting the “add program” button. You can edit only a program’s delivery method and audience type by selecting the “update/edit” button to the right of the program description (same as currently allowed today). You can delete a program, if all PTINs records have been reported and you no longer wish to offer the program by selecting the “delete” button to the right of the program description. There will be a warning message before you delete the program, but just make sure it's really the step you want to take before agreeing to the deletion.

<u>Adding/Editing Programs – Page 6</u>

You will add programs in a very similar way as you do now. All fields are required when adding a program, but the user can only edit audience type and delivery method for an existing program.

We are keeping the same numbering scheme for program numbers and will be carrying your current approved programs over to the new system.

<u>Reporting PTIN Records</u>

Manually Reporting PTINs – Page 7

Page 7 shows the fields required to report manual PTIN records or instructor hours.

You will enter the information for the PTIN holder and select the “Add PTIN” button. The information will automatically be shown in the bottom section entitled “PTINs Reported for this Program”. If you find you made a mistake before you submit, you can easily clear the fields. If you find you need to zero out a record, just choose the option of "remove" in the PTINs reported for this program table and it will automatically send a zero credit hour record to delete the previous record from the PTIN system. If you then have a corrected record to send, you can input that just the way you do any new record.

You can manually report PTINs at any time by clicking on the “PTIN Manual Reporting” button to the right of the program description (see page 5). This will be where you will report instructor hours. You can also access PTIN Manual Reporting by going to the "Programs" link in the navigation panel on the left hand column of your screen (the quick links).

If you select the “PTIN Upload” button at the bottom of this page it will take you to the Excel template upload process, which we will cover a little later. The change here is you go into the program you want to report manual PTIN records against and will be able to report only that program's completions from that screen. This is a change from the way it functioned before. If you want to manually report PTINs against another program, you will need to click on the programs screen and choose the program you want to report against by selecting "PTIN Manual Reporting" from that particular program (again, see page 5). The way this is now structured will give you a full view of ALL PTINs reported against that program so that you may search for a particular name, PTIN, or completion date as an added feature. In addition, we are adding a "reports" feature (see left hand navigation panel) that will allow you to check all CE earned by a particular PTIN holder, etc. This will be coming soon after our initial launch.

Uploading Excel template to report PTINs – Pages 8 & 9

You will be able to upload PTIN records via the Excel template. The template has been slightly redesigned. You can get to this page by selecting the quick link "PTIN Upload" on the navigation panel from the main page or from anywhere in the system as the navigation panel will appear on all screens.

The files are automatically validated, you will see the records that are valid and those with errors. If you remember, previously you had to wait for the system to validate your records and then had to come back into your account to view success/failures. The files will now be validated immediately. However, **you MUST print or save the errors by selecting the appropriate button at the bottom of the page before you select "click here to process valid data" or these records will be lost**. Again, rejected records will not be saved, so it will be up to you to ensure you save those records. You must select "process valid data" for the records to be uploaded. All error messages will remain the same and will be included in the System Help Guide that will be accessible from the main page.

Public Listing

The public listing of IRS Approved CE Providers will look very similar to the previous list. You will have the same options of what you want displayed on the public listing and can also choose to opt out of being listed at all. When you input or change the public listing information in your account, you will see a sample of what your entry will look like on the public listing. This will help you catch any spelling errors or incorrect information before submitting.

Summary of the major changes in the new CE Provider system

- You will be able to have one PPOC and multiple APOCs, if desired, with separate logins/passwords to manage your account as you best see fit.
- The provider home page will be better organized, with the most important information on the front page and links to specific tasks/areas in the left and right columns of the home page.
- You will know immediately if PTINs are accepted when you upload a PTIN file and the new system will not require as many steps to successfully report the valid records. You will, however, need to ensure you capture records with errors prior to clicking to submit the "good" records.

- You will be able to send and receive secure messages with attachments to the IRS through your account. This will be helpful because you will now be able to exchange PII, such as PTIN record issues, though your secure mailbox.
- You will be able to see all PTINs that have been successfully reported per program. This includes those both manually reported and reported in a file upload.
- You will have improved search features within the system.
- You will be able to use a mobile device to connect to the CE Provider system.

Provider Questions and Answers

PTIN Reporting

Are you communicating to PTIN-holders that CE Providers cannot report their PTINs during this transition period?

Yes. We added messaging inside the PTIN system, under "View My Continuing Education Credits" that states there will be a delay for approximately a month while we transition to a new CE Provider reporting system and for PTIN holders to check back in mid-October for the latest regarding CE credits.

In the new system, how quickly will uploads appear in PTIN accounts?

Same as before, after reporting PTINs, allow 24 hours for return preparers to see the CE in their PTIN account.

Can we use the current Excel template to store our records until the new system is ready to accept them?

Yes, you will be able to report PTINs on the previous Excel template or on the new Excel template.

Can the new system handle all of us Providers uploading PTINs as soon as new system comes up?

Yes, the new system is Cloud based so there shouldn't be issue with high user traffic and volume.

Can we automate the PTIN upload file by using FTP or some other web service?

The current template was redesigned so that there are no instructions at the top, which may allow you to automate the sending of the template. However, as far as an FTP or other web services delivery option is concerned, we , will be offering that as a future enhancement to the system. We will communicate to all providers when an FTP/web services option is available.

When you transfer our data, will all my PTIN uploads transfer over to my new account?

We anticipate all your data, PTINs included, being transferred to the new system.

Will we continue to get a green checkmark when PTIN records are good when we submit a manual PTIN record?

No. Instead, the validated records will be pushed to the "PTINs Reported for this Program" section. The rejected record will stay in the "Manual PTIN Reporting" section with a red box around the PTIN and the associated error displayed in the box. "Clear fields" can be used if the record cannot be immediately fixed.

Program Numbers

During the down period, can we still get new program/course numbers?

Yes, in emergency situation, we can get you a number. Send an email request to rpo.ce@irs.gov and include your contact information. You will need to include all of the program information you would typically input into the system in order for us to assign a number.

When getting a program number, it was immediate. Will it be the same with the new system?

Yes.

Points of Contact

If an APOC sends email to IRS, will other APOCs see IRS response?

Yes, all APOCs will see the messages sent to the IRS and the responses received.

Miscellaneous Questions

When entering a program description, there are issues in the current system with punctuation/special characters not being allowed, will the new system take care of that?

Yes, the new system will allow all special characters.

The current help line has been exemplary – is the next one going to be as helpful? Will new vendor have their own crew?

The new vendor supports CTEC and we feel confident in their knowledge about CE Providers and CA preparers. However, remember this is a new program for them and there will be a learning curve to get up to speed on all the rules and guidelines.

What is the new system website address?

The address is ceprovider.us. This page will not be available until new system launches.

How many instructor credit hours are allowed?

6 hours per year for an Enrolled Agent and 4 hours per year for uncredentialed return preparer. Refer to Circular 230 for details.