

# CONSUMER ALERT

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December 19, 2007

### Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Coverage *Open Enrollment Ends December 31<sup>st</sup>*

*The 2008 open enrollment for Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Coverage is November 15 - December 31, 2007. The following information may help you when you select a prescription drug plan (PDP) or change your coverage.*

#### **Where to go for help?**

Medicare beneficiaries can seek assistance in reviewing coverage options from 1-800-MEDICARE (633-4227) or [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov), the *State Health Insurance Assistance Program* (SHIP) at 1-800-432-4040. Beneficiaries who need extra help with plan premium and copayment assistance can contact the *Social Security Administration* at (800) 772-1213 to inquire about eligibility.

#### **What are Medicare Prescription Drug Plans?**

In 2006, the federal government implemented a Medicare prescription drug coverage benefit for Medicare beneficiaries. Private insurance companies, whose plans have been approved by Medicare, sell Medicare PDPs. Everyone with Medicare is eligible to enroll in a PDP, regardless of income or assets.

#### **What if I am already enrolled in a Medicare prescription drug plan?**

Plans might change from year to year, so examine all available plans during each annual enrollment season, as your current plan may no longer best meet your needs. Check the features of your plan, including the list of drugs covered and the amount of premium you pay. If you are satisfied with your current plan, you do not need to do anything to remain in your current plan.

**What if I am enrolled in a Medicare Advantage Plan with prescription drug coverage?** Medicare Advantage plans (Medicare health plans) might also make changes to important features of your plan from year to year, including the list of drugs covered, the premium you pay, cost-sharing requirements and provider networks. You should carefully review your plan options during each open enrollment season. If you take no action, you will remain in your current plan.

#### **Attention Arizona Medicare Beneficiaries:**

The government regularly receives complaints about misconduct in Medicare Advantage and PDP marketing.

Remember only licensed insurance agents can sell Medicare Prescription Drug Plans (PDPs).

Agents marketing PDPs *cannot*:

- Make *uninvited* sales visits to your home, or send unsolicited emails.
- Remain in your home if you ask them to leave.
- Represent themselves as government employees.
- Use high pressure sales tactics.

**Do I need a Medicare prescription drug plan?**

A Medicare prescription drug plan may provide more coverage than a Medicare supplement insurance (Medigap) policy or employer-provided prescription drug coverage. "Creditable" coverage means coverage that is as good as the Medicare prescription drug coverage benefit. If Medicare considers your employer-provided drug coverage "creditable", you can keep your current coverage without incurring future penalties. Check with your employer.

**Enrollment Dates and Late Enrollment Penalties.**

Voluntary enrollment for Medicare prescription drug plans for 2008 began November 15 and ends December 31, 2007. If you enroll by December 31, your new Medicare prescription drug coverage will begin January 1, 2008. If you are eligible, but wait until **after** December 31 to enroll, you may be subject to late enrollment penalties—generally 1% per month for every month you delay enrollment. That means if you wait until March, you would pay a 3% late enrollment penalty. There is no limit on the penalty, so the longer you wait to enroll, the higher the premium you will pay.

**What are my options if I want to enroll in a Medicare prescription drug plan?**

You can enroll in a stand-alone prescription drug plan (Medicare Part D) or you can choose a Medicare Advantage plan (Medicare Part C) that includes the drug benefit. Compare plans to see which meets your individual needs:

- See if all of your prescriptions are on the plan's list of drugs (called a *formulary*).
- Check for your preferred pharmacy.
- Find out what co-payments you will be responsible for paying when filling a prescription.
- Is the premium for your preferred plan affordable?

**Protect yourself from Medicare scam artists:**

- Beware of door-to-door sales people. Agents cannot solicit at your home without an appointment. Do not let uninvited agents into your home. Be leery of high pressure sales tactics.
- Verify that the salesperson is a licensed agent by calling the Arizona Department of Insurance: (602) 364-2499 or 1-800-325-2548 outside Phoenix.
- Do not give out personal information such as Social Security numbers, bank account numbers or credit card numbers to anyone unless you verified that person is a licensed agent! Marketers are not allowed to request such personal information nor can they ask for payment over the Internet. They must send you a bill by mail! Once you decide to purchase a plan and have verified that the agent is licensed, you may give the agent personal information to assist in enrollment and billing.
- Verify that the plan you have chosen is an approved Medicare plan. All of the approved plans are listed on [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) or by calling 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227).

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