



Illinois Department of Insurance

Illinois Department on Aging

NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Monday, October 15, 2012

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Medicare Part D Open-Enrollment Period Starts October 15; Department of Insurance Offers Free Counseling

*SHIP Counselors Provide Help with Options; Call toll-free at
(800) 548-9034 or visit the website at <http://insurance.Illinois.gov/SHIP>*

SPRINGFIELD - October 15, 2012. Illinois Department of Insurance (DOI) Director Andrew Boron today announced free counseling assistance is available to help educate Medicare-eligible individuals and their caregivers about available Medicare Part D insurance options. The department's Senior Health Insurance Program (SHIP) provides free counseling for Medicare beneficiaries and their caregivers. Medicare Part D open enrollment season runs from October 15 through December 7.

"Medicare open enrollment is an especially busy time for SHIP counselors who help seniors and people with disabilities who may want to change their Medicare plans. Now is the time to make changes to your Part D plan without incurring a penalty," said Director Boron.

Medicare coverage and determining which of the different options to select can be difficult. SHIP counselors explain the various drug and supplemental programs that are available to seniors and people with disabilities to help them make the best decisions. The SHIP toll free hotline is open weekdays from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at 800-548-9034.

It's also important for individuals on the state's Circuit Breaker program to select a new drug program during the open enrollment period if they haven't already done so. The state's prescription drug assistance program Illinois Cares Rx is no longer available to help pay for prescription drugs and Medicare Part D premiums. Illinois Department on Aging Director John K. Holton, Ph.D., says it is important that individuals contact their Part D prescription drug plan to find out their premium and prescription drug costs and make necessary changes to help save on costs.

"Many who have been enrolled in a Part D plan for a number of years automatically renew without doing any research, but a review of their coverage could prove beneficial by saving money on premiums and prescription costs," said Director Holton.

SHIP is a year round program, not affiliated with any insurance company, and counselors do not sell or solicit any type of insurance. Counselors educate and answer questions about Medicare, Medicare Supplement, long term care insurance, Medicare HMOs, private fee-for-service and other health insurance; Organize/assist filing Medicare and Medicare Supplement claims; and Analyze Medicare Supplement and long term care policies.

For more information, visit the website at <http://insurance.Illinois.gov/SHIP> or call SHIP toll-free at 800-548-9034. A list of SHIP volunteers is available at <http://insurance.illinois.gov/ship/SiteSponsorListbyCounty.pdf>.

About the Illinois Department on Aging

The Department's mission is to serve and advocate for older Illinoisans and their caregivers by administering quality and culturally appropriate programs that promote partnerships and encourage independence, dignity, and quality of life. For more information, call the Senior HelpLine at 800-252-8966 (or TTY for the hearing impaired at 888-206-1327), or log on to the website at www.state.il.us/aging.

About the Illinois Department of Insurance

The Department's mission is to protect consumers by providing assistance and information, by efficiently regulating the insurance industry's market behavior and financial solvency, and by fostering a competitive insurance marketplace. The Department assists consumers with all insurance complaints, including health, auto, life, and homeowner.

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