

Seniors Take Note!

Medicare's Annual Open Enrollment Period Provides Important Opportunity

As many seniors know, every year insurance companies can change their plan's premiums, deductibles, co-pays and formularies (list of prescription drugs the insurance company will cover). That means a plan that worked well for you in 2012 may or may not be the best plan for you in 2013!

The Annual Open Enrollment Period for Medicare Part D and Medicare Advantage Plans is just around the corner. **October 15 through December 7th** marks that period this year. Some will let that time come and go without taking any notice. Yet this period of time provides seniors with an important, once a year opportunity to make the most of their Medicare plan. It is a time to review your current plan, determine if it is still the best plan for you and if not, enroll in a new plan.

By now, enrollees should have received an Annual Notice of Change from their plans, detailing all the changes to the plan. It is very important to read this notice. There are also some plans in Wisconsin that are terminating this year. If you received notice that your plan is terminating you will need to enroll in a new plan. Otherwise you will find yourself without coverage.

The best way to objectively compare all of the Medicare Part D and Medicare Advantage Plan options is to use the "Planfinder" on the Medicare website (medicare.gov). The Planfinder can be used by you or someone you know who is comfortable using the internet. Be sure to click on "Find Health and Drug Plans" on the medicare.gov website to begin using the Planfinder. By entering your zip code you will be sure to find plans available in your area. By entering your current medications and choice of pharmacy, the Planfinder can calculate your estimated total cost for the year for each insurance option available.

IF you do not have access to the internet (or a computer-savvy friend) you can receive non-biased assistance with plan comparisons through the ADRC of

Waukesha County. The Elder Benefit Specialists there can provide this assistance with plan comparisons as well as free health benefits counseling services for Medicare beneficiaries. They can be reached at 262-548-7848.

But what about those who need a little more help? Now more than ever, many seniors are struggling to make ends meet. The Annual Open Enrollment Period may be a great time to review your financial situation to determine whether you may be eligible for one of the Medicare related programs designed to help seniors with low or limited income and assets.

“Medicare Savings Programs” can help individuals with Medicare related costs, such as the monthly Medicare Part B premium. Another program, known as “Extra Help”, assists individuals with their prescription drug costs.

If your monthly income is at or below \$1,396 (\$1,891 for a couple) and your assets are less than \$13,070 (\$26,120 for a couple) you may be eligible for one of these programs. Your home and car are not counted toward that asset limit.

If you think you may meet these eligibility requirements, contact the Elder Benefit Specialists at the ADRC of Waukesha County at 262-548-7848 to schedule an appointment.