

Information and Assistance Resources for Medicare Beneficiaries

There are several options available to provide prescription drug cost assistance to Medicare beneficiaries, including Medicare-approved drug discount cards, state pharmacy assistance programs, and manufacturers' discount programs. Medicare recognizes that physicians and other health care professionals have limited time to counsel patients. The following resources offer information and assistance to Medicare beneficiaries in finding the greatest savings on their prescription drugs.

The 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) Toll-Free Call Center

This Call Center is available 24 hours per day and 7 days per week. It connects beneficiaries with customer service representatives who can answer questions and perform price comparisons for drug discount cards and other assistance programs. Beneficiaries should prepare a list of current prescription drugs and dosages prior to contacting the Call Center. Beneficiaries may request a copy of their individualized price comparison results. TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048.

The Prescription Drug and Other Assistance Programs Website at Medicare.gov

www.medicare.gov/AssistancePrograms/home.asp

For individuals who use the Internet, this site features eligibility, enrollment, and price comparison information for each available drug discount card in a particular area, as well as their state pharmacy assistance programs. It also has a tool that helps beneficiaries determine the best savings program based on their prescription drugs.

Medicare's Guide to Choosing a Medicare-Approved Drug Discount Card

www.medicare.gov

This resource provides beneficiaries with information on choosing a card, enrolling, and submitting complaints. This guide also features sample enrollment forms and worksheets to assist beneficiaries in selecting the discount card that is right for them.

State Health Insurance Assistance Programs (SHIP)

Beneficiaries may also contact their SHIP counselor for information on prescription drug cost assistance programs. To find the telephone number for the nearest SHIP, call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) or visit www.medicare.gov/Contacts/Related/Ships.asp on the Web.

Information Resources for Physicians and Other Health Care Professionals

- Download a free patient-education brochure at www.medicare.gov (or call 1-800-MEDICARE to order a limited number of free copies);
- Attend CMS Open Door Forums in person or by telephone (toll-free). These forums address concerns and issues of physicians, nurses, and allied health professionals. Visit www.cms.hhs.gov/opendoor for further details;
- Visit www.cms.hhs.gov/medicarereform for the latest information on MMA; and
- Contact your carrier for information by using the toll-free provider lines. Visit www.cms.hhs.gov/medlearn/tollnums.asp for your carrier's toll-free number.

The document is not intended to serve as a legal document. The official Medicare program provisions are contained in the relevant laws, regulations, and rulings.

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services



The Medicare-Approved Drug Discount Cards and Transitional Assistance Program

A Brochure for Physicians and Other Health Care Professionals



Overview

Your relationship with Medicare beneficiaries means that you may be asked questions about Medicare-Approved Drug Discount Cards and Transitional Assistance Program. This brochure is designed to help you assist Medicare patients in finding the information they need, and also give you an overview of the new Medicare-Approved Drug Discount Cards and Transitional Assistance Program.

Drug discount cards leverage the ability of large groups to receive discounts from drug manufacturers. Private companies will design discount card programs with the Medicare-approved seal. The drug discount card programs may have drug discount lists (formularies) that provide savings on brand name and generic prescription drugs to qualified beneficiaries. The discount drug lists may be different for each card, and may be subject to change. Therefore, it is important that beneficiaries consider their choices carefully.

New Medicare Programs

The Medicare Modernization Act of 2003 (MMA) introduces changes that are designed to strengthen the current Medicare Program. Over the next three years, there will be major landmarks in Medicare coverage:

- In 2004, temporary Medicare-approved drug discount cards are available for qualifying beneficiaries. Also, under the Transitional Assistance Program, certain low-income beneficiaries qualify for a \$600 credit to help pay for prescription drugs;
- In 2005, new preventive benefits will be covered, including a one-time Welcome-to-Medicare wellness physical exam and screening tests for the early detection of diabetes and cardiovascular diseases; and
- In 2006, prescription drug benefit plans will be available to all Medicare beneficiaries.

Medicare-Approved Drug Discount Cards

Beneficiaries will bring their discount cards to the pharmacy with their prescription(s). The discount cards will carry the Medicare-approved seal, which will look like this:



Medicare beneficiaries will receive their prescription drugs at a discounted price, depending on the prescription drug and the card's discount drug list. Since each discount card will offer different discounts on prescription drugs, Medicare beneficiaries should review their current list of prescription drugs and select a card that offers the best savings for them.

Highlights of the Drug Discount Cards

- A temporary program until the new Medicare prescription drug coverage starts in 2006;
- Enrollment started in May 2004;
- Available to qualified beneficiaries regardless of income;
- May charge an annual enrollment fee of no more than \$30, which may be paid by Medicare for some low-income beneficiaries;
- Require private companies to provide beneficiaries the ability to use their discount cards in pharmacies near their homes; and
- Beneficiaries are **not** required to purchase prescription drugs through mail-order pharmacies.

Eligibility for the Drug Discount Cards

Beneficiaries qualify for a drug discount card regardless of income, if:

- They are entitled to Medicare Part A (inpatient hospital coverage) and/or enrolled in Medicare Part B (outpatient health care and doctor fee coverage); and
- They are not receiving outpatient prescription drug benefits through State Medicaid programs.

Requirements for Using Drug Discount Cards

To participate, beneficiaries must:

- 1) Enroll in only one card;
- 2) Pay an annual enrollment fee, if any; and
- 3) Remain with the selected discount card for the rest of the calendar year, unless the card company stops offering the card, or the beneficiary:
 - Permanently moves to a state where the card is not offered;
 - Enters or leaves a long-term care facility (e.g., nursing home); or
 - Enrolls in or disenrolls from a Medicare Managed Care Plan.

Transitional Assistance Program

Beneficiaries with the greatest need will have the greatest help available to them. A \$600 credit is available for each calendar year (2004 and 2005) to help Medicare beneficiaries pay for prescription drugs.

Eligibility for the Transitional Assistance Program

- Individuals with an annual income in 2004 of no more than \$12,569 if single or \$16,862 if married, and individuals receiving help from their state in paying their Medicare premiums or cost sharing, may qualify for a \$600 credit on their discount card to help pay for prescription drugs. These income limits change every year.
- Residents of Puerto Rico or a U.S. territory are not eligible for the \$600 credit from Medicare. However, they may be eligible for similar assistance provided by the territory in which they reside.
- Beneficiaries cannot qualify for the \$600 credit if they already have outpatient prescription drug coverage from certain other sources.