



SENIOR HEALTH NEWS



Volume 6, Issue 4

August 2004

Call The Pennsylvania Health Law Project Help-Line to Sign Up
-800.274.3258



Medicare Part D Proposed Regulations Released!

The proposed regulations for the Medicare Part D drug benefit were published this month. These regulations describe how the Medicare Part D prescription drug benefit will work. However, they are only proposed regulations which means that there may be some changes to them. The final regulations are due to be published in the spring of 2005. The Medicare drug benefit itself is supposed to begin on January 1, 2006. Medicare consumers are scheduled to begin enrolling in the prescription drug plans in the fall of 2005.

The proposed Part D program contains many complex details that will impact all Medicare consumers. Depending on your situation and needs, it may impact you very differently than others. It is important to understand how the proposed regulations may affect you.

The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the federal agency that runs Medicare, is asking for comments on the proposed regulations. Because so many people use Medicare, it is important that CMS hear from many different perspectives. If you want to make comments, they must be submitted to the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Ser-

vices before October 4, 2004.

The Pennsylvania Health Law Project will be doing several presentations in different parts of Pennsylvania to help you understand what the regulations say.

We have scheduled presentations in September in Pittsburgh, Harrisburg and Philadelphia. At these presentations, we will summarize the regulations and discuss how the regulations will impact different kinds of Medicare consumers.

We will also publish a special version of the Senior Health News in September, explaining the proposed regulations. You can see the regulations themselves at the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services website at www.medicare.gov or you can link to them from our website at www.phlp.org.

All are welcome to attend our sessions. The dates, times and places are on the next page of the Senior Health News.



The Pennsylvania Health Law Project
Presents
Information Sessions on the

Proposed Regulations for the Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit

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Visit us online at
www.phlp.org!!

Pittsburgh	
Sessions Highlighting Disability Issues	Sessions Highlighting Senior Issues
<p>Mon, Sept 13 @ 10am -12pm United Way Bldg Simmons Board Rm 1 Smithfield St Pittsburgh, PA <i>At this presentation, sign lan- guage interpreters available upon request</i></p>	<p>Tue, Sept. 14 @ 1:30pm - 3:30pm Southwestern Pennsylvania Human Services Area Agency on Aging Eastgate 8 Monessan, PA</p>
<p>Thurs, Sept. 16 @ 1pm—3pm Cranberry Public Library 2525 Rochester Rd. Suite 300 Cranberry Twp, PA</p>	<p>Wed, Sept. 15 @ 10am—12pm Northland Public Library 300 Cumberland Rd. Pittsburgh, PA</p>
Philadelphia— One Session Only!	
<p>Thursday, Sept 16 @ 10am – 11:30am Philadelphia Bar Association 1101 Market St., 11th flr Philadelphia</p>	
Harrisburg— One Session Only!	
<p>Monday, Sept 20 @ 10am – 12pm Pennsylvania Medical Society Bldg 777 East Park Dr. Harrisburg, PA</p>	

HealthChoices report on Behavioral Health Released!

The Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services has published a performance report that is now available to HealthChoices Behavioral Health consumers, families, and people in recovery. The report is part of an effort to monitor how well the mental health and drug treatment system is working, and can be used as an advocacy tool for needed services and improvements. The information gathered for the report this year forms part of a baseline performance report, which will be used for developing goals for later years. In this report, results are compared with national norms from other similar plans, as well as Gold Standards, which are the performance levels OMHSAS would like to see the Counties achieve.

The report, titled "HealthChoices Behavioral Health Baseline Performance Report," addresses three key areas of performance: access, quality of process, and quality of outcomes.

Most of the report looked at mental health services and access for people under 65. However, quality of some services for people over 65 was looked at. For example, the report found that state-wide, 4% of people over 65 who had been discharged from a psychiatric facility where they were getting inpatient treatment were readmitted within 30 days. This is a quality problem because when people are discharged from a psychiatric hospital but then readmitted soon after, it may mean that they did not get the services that they needed when they

were first in the hospital. As the state's goal is for no more 10% of people discharged from psychiatric facilities to be readmitted within 30 days, the state met its goal. However, some counties had more than 10% of people over 65 who had been discharged from psychiatric facilities readmitted within 30 days of being released and many counties did not have any statistics reported.

The only other area looked at for people over 65 looked at whether there was someone had follow-up care within 7 days of people discharged from inpatient psychiatric treatment. The state's Gold Standard for follow-up care is for 90% of people being released from inpatient psychiatric treatment to receive follow-up services within 7 days of discharge. Only three counties measured this for people over 65- Philadelphia county, Westmoreland county and Allegheny county. All three counties were well below the state's Gold Standard of 90% of people receiving follow-up care.

On a national level, only 32% of all people receive follow-up care within 7 days of being discharged and both Philadelphia and Westmoreland counties were above the national norm in percentage of people receiving follow-up care after being discharged from inpatient psychiatric treatment.

The HealthChoices Behavioral Health Baseline Performance Report is available online at www.dpw.state.pa.us/omhsas.



Community Choice Program to Expand throughout Pennsylvania!

For months, SENIOR HEALTH NEWS has reported on the exciting Community Choice pilot project that was launched October 2003 in SW Pennsylvania. Drawing on massive collaboration and creative solutions to long time problems in accessing home and community based services, the Community Choice pilot has demonstrated success and will now go statewide.

On June 16th, 2004 Governor Ed Rendell announced that Community Choice, a process to help improve access to publicly funded home and community based long-term care services, will be expanded to all Pennsylvania counties. The roll-out of Community Choice will begin this fall.

Community Choice was piloted earlier this year in southwestern Pennsylvania (Washington, Fayette and Greene counties) and Philadelphia. These pilot projects are still underway in these counties. The initial results of these pilots support the decision to expand Community Choice.

Through Community Choice, access to existing home and community based services programs is streamlined and expedited. Community Choice includes access to 24 hour needs assessments, provision of services within 48 hours when needed, streamlined home modification programs, and increased resource eligibility levels so that more people qualify for help. Under Community Choice, waiting times for receiving services after hospital stays have been reduced, and consumers can receive round-the-clock assistance in applying for services.

Prior to Community Choice, consumers faced lengthy delays in obtaining home and community based services, often leading to unwanted nursing home placements. The quicker timeframes used in Community Choice prevent unwanted nursing home placements.

Community Choice is helping to give people who need assistance in their homes options they may not have had before, and soon these programs will be available across the state. The roll-out of Community Choice will begin the fall.

For Community Choice in Washington, Fayette and Greene counties, call 1-800-734-9603. For Community Choice in Philadelphia county, call 1-888-482-9060



Medicare Demonstration Program to Help Some Beneficiaries with Prescription Drug Costs

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services recently announced the start of a demonstration project that will provide Medicare beneficiaries who have certain life-threatening diseases savings on certain drugs they take for their conditions. Approximately 50,000 Medicare beneficiaries diagnosed with nine types of cancer or eight other serious diagnoses (such as multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis, and pulmonary hypertension) will be chosen through a lottery system to participate in this demonstration.

Under this project, which is called the Medicare Replacement Drug Demonstration, Medicare will help to pay for certain drugs that can be taken by the patient at home. The drugs taken at home "replace" the same drug that a beneficiary currently receives in the doctor's office.

The amount a beneficiary will pay for these drugs will depend on their income. Primarily, the cost sharing for the drugs will be similar to the "standard" package under the Medicare Part D prescription drug benefit (without the monthly premium payment). Under this payment structure, a Medicare beneficiary will have a \$250 deductible, pay 25% of their drug costs until a certain payment level is reached, then have no coverage until a certain point when catastrophic coverage kicks in. Beneficiaries with lower income will have lower cost sharing requirements.

CMS is estimating that beneficiaries will save 55 to 90% off the cost of the prescription drugs over the course of a year with lower income beneficiaries experiencing the greatest savings.

Eligibility criteria:

- ????Beneficiary must be enrolled in Medicare Part A and Part B
- ????Medicare must be the primary payer
- ????Beneficiary may not have comprehensive

drug coverage through certain other sources

????Beneficiary must have a signed certification from a doctor stating that he/she requires one of the drugs covered under the demonstration program.

????Beneficiary must live in one of the 50 states or District of Columbia

Applications are being accepted now through September 30, 2004 with coverage to start as early as September 1st for those who apply before August 16, 2004. The demonstration will end on December 31, 2005 when the Medicare Part D benefit begins.

For more information or to get an application, you can call 1-800-563-5386.



Problems Accessing Services for Persons on Medicare and Medical Assistance

Many consumers who have Medicare also qualify for Medical Assistance.. Even though these two insurances together should provide exceptionally comprehensive coverage for consumers, consumers often have difficulty getting everything they need. Accessing services when you have both coverages can be very complicated.

Do you or someone you work with have Medicare and Medical Assistance? Are they having problems accessing services? Let us know! We are trying to find out what kinds of problems people with both Medicare and Medical Assistance face when trying to accessing medical services. Please e-mail us with the problems you see most at jnix@phlp.org.

**Attend a free training on helping seniors accessing
Medical Assistance!**

The Pennsylvania Health Law Project, with the generous support of the Pew Charitable Foundation, is training people who work with seniors on helping seniors access Medical Assistance. We are still scheduling trainings for social service staff at senior centers and other agencies who work with seniors on using our Quickscreen, a new on-line tool that helps screen for Medical Assistance eligibility, and on Compass, the Department of Public Welfare's on-line application tool.

We have several open presentations scheduled to help social service staff learn to screen seniors for Medical Assistance eligibility and then apply for services on-line. The open trainings currently scheduled are:

Philadelphia County	
Thursday, Sept 23 9:30am - 11am Spring Garden Senior Center Philadelphia	Thursday, Sept 30 2pm - 3:30pm West Oak Lane Senior Center Philadelphia

Chester County
Thursday, Oct 14 10am - 11:30am Oxford Senior Center Oxford, PA

Call the Pennsylvania Health Law Project at 800-274-3258 to reserve a space or to schedule a training for your staff!



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