

State of Alaska
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

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NEWS RELEASE



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For the Senior Voice

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Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage and new SeniorCare benefits begin January 2006

Alaska's SeniorCare will soon change for seniors for the better □ and will wrap around the new Medicare Prescription Drug benefit to provide prescription drug coverage for qualifying seniors. The SeniorCare Information Office, within the Alaska Department of Health & Social Services (DHSS), is now ready to answer questions about these benefits and refer seniors to local volunteers for additional help.

Seniors and disabled individuals who are currently enrolled in Medicare will have an opportunity to enroll in the new Medicare Prescription Drug Plan beginning on Nov.15, 2005 and ending on May 15, 2006.

Applications for the new Alaska's SeniorCare benefit are available now. The SeniorCare cash assistance of \$120 a month will continue for seniors who meet income and asset guidelines. Seniors with incomes below \$16,133 for individuals, or \$21,641 for couples are eligible to receive the SeniorCare \$120 monthly cash assistance, with liquid assets of up to \$6,000 for an individual and \$9,000 for a couple. In addition, the Medicare prescription drug program will cover premiums and deductibles for these seniors. Seniors already enrolled in SeniorCare have already received a letter and a new application from DHSS to reenroll when the program changes go into effect in January.

SeniorCare benefits will expand to cover the Medicare prescription drug plan premiums and deductibles for qualified seniors. This subsidy will be available for seniors with incomes below \$20,913 for individuals or \$28,053 for couples, with liquid assets of up to \$50,000 for an individual and \$100,000 for a couple.

Medicare Prescription Drug coverage is voluntary. Seniors who choose to enroll in Medicare Prescription Drug coverage must choose the plan that will best serve their prescription needs.

For anyone enrolled in both Medicare *and* Medicaid, their drug coverage will switch from Medicaid to Medicare on January 1, 2006. If these enrollees do not choose a plan by December 31, 2006; they will be assigned at random to a Medicare prescription drug plan, but can change

plans at any time. They should check to make sure the plan they are assigned to will meet their prescription needs and choose another plan if it doesn't.

Alaska has trained Medicare volunteer counselors throughout the state to provide information for seniors on enrollment. For information or to locate Medicare counselors, call the SeniorCare Information Office at 1-800-478-6065 (within Alaska), or in Anchorage, 269-3680.

Enrollment in the Medicare Prescription Drug Plan and SeniorCare prior to Dec. 31, 2006, will ensure coverage will begin on Jan. 1, 2006. The SeniorCare legislation continuing and expanding SeniorCare was signed into law by Governor Frank H. Murkowski this summer to ensure the benefit begins the same time the Medicare Prescription Drug Plan begins.