

U.S. House and Senate Notification
Wednesday, August 25, 2010

To: Congressional Health Staff

From: Amy Hall
Director, Office of Legislation
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services

Subject: HHS Announces Expanded Medicare Coverage of Tobacco Cessation Counseling

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services today announced expanded Medicare coverage of evidence-based tobacco cessation counseling. Before today's decision, Medicare covered tobacco cessation counseling only for individuals who were already diagnosed with a tobacco-related disease or showed signs or symptoms of such a disease. Under the new coverage, any smoker covered by Medicare may receive tobacco cessation counseling from a qualified physician or other Medicare-recognized practitioner. The new benefit will cover two tobacco cessation attempts per year, each consisting of up to four counseling sessions. Medicare beneficiaries also continue to have access to smoking-cessation prescription medication through the Medicare Prescription Drug Program (Part D).

Today's decision marks the second time the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has added a new preventive benefit under authority granted by the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act (MIPPA). In December 2009, CMS added coverage of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) screening for at-risk beneficiaries. Under the Affordable Care Act, beginning January 1, 2011, most Medicare-covered preventive services, including tobacco cessation counseling under today's decision, will be available at no cost to beneficiaries. The Affordable Care Act also gives beneficiaries access to a free annual physical exam so they can partner with their doctors to develop and update personal prevention plans based on their current health needs and risk factors.

In a related development, Secretary Kathleen Sebelius and the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health will hold a joint press conference today to announce a new anti-smoking campaign in Los Angeles County. The County was one of 44 communities nationwide to be awarded a grant through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act's *Communities Putting Prevention to Work* initiative to fund prevention and wellness efforts. L.A. County was one of the largest grant recipients, receiving approximately \$32 million over a two-year period for activities addressing obesity, physical activity, nutrition, and tobacco cessation. Medicare's expanded coverage of tobacco cessation counseling will also be announced at this event by the Secretary.

More information on today's national coverage decision is available on the CMS website at <http://www.cms.gov/center/coverage.asp>. A Press Release announcing the decision is also attached.

If you have any questions, please contact the CMS Office of Legislation. Thank you.

