

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES  
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services  
Center for Beneficiary Choices  
7500 Security Boulevard  
Baltimore, Maryland 21244-1850



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**DATE:** March 31, 2006

**TO:** All Medicare Advantage Organizations, Prescription Drug Plans, Cost Plans, PACE Organizations and Demonstrations

**FROM:** Randy Brauer, Acting Director  
Division of Enrollment & Eligibility Policy  
Medicare Enrollment and Appeals Group

**SUBJECT: REVISED -- Additional opportunities for individuals affected by Hurricane Katrina to join and switch Medicare Plans, including Medicare prescription drug plans in 2006**

CMS will provide all Hurricane Katrina evacuees a special enrollment period (SEP) that gives them more time to change their Medicare prescription drug plans in 2006. Individuals will be considered “evacuees” and eligible for this SEP if they reside in any of the zip-codes declared as meeting the level of “individual assistance” by the Federal Emergency Management Agency at the time of the hurricane (August 2005). Please refer to the attached spreadsheet of designated zip codes.

While CMS is providing this list for ease of reference, CMS defers to the information provided on the FEMA website – <http://www.fema.gov/news/disasters.fema?year=2005> - for counties declared eligible for “individual assistance” as a result of Hurricane Katrina.

The special enrollment period means that Katrina evacuees will be able to join and switch plans, including Medicare prescription drug plans, at any time through Dec. 31, 2006. This special enrollment period allows Katrina evacuees to change regardless of a change in residence, such as if they have temporarily located, have moved back to their permanent home, or if there are other circumstances that require more time to choose or change plans.

To determine if individual is eligible for this SEP, Medicare plans must first attempt to obtain proof that the individual resided in an affected zip code (e.g., driver's license, utility bills, etc.). If the individual is unable to provide such proof, the plan must accept the beneficiary's attestation that he or she resided in an affected zip code.