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New Educational Products Available: The Fourth in the MLN Matters Series of Articles on the Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage

Note: This article was updated on February 26, 2013, to reflect current Web addresses. All other information remains unchanged.

Provider Types Affected

Physicians, providers, suppliers, and their staff providing service to people with Medicare

Important Points to Remember

- On January 1, 2006, new prescription drug coverage will be available to your Medicare patients.
- You should encourage your Medicare patients to learn more about this new coverage because it may save them money on prescription drugs.
- If your Medicare patients ask you questions about the new coverage, you can refer them to 1-800-MEDICARE and to <http://www.medicare.gov> for additional information and assistance.

This article announces new educational resources available to assist Medicare beneficiaries in their understanding of the new Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage.

Release of Notices to Medicare Beneficiaries Who Automatically Qualify for Extra Help

Starting at the end of May through June, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is mailing notices to people who are automatically eligible for extra help paying for a Medicare prescription drug plan, including people with Medicare and Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income, and Medicare Savings Program coverage.

The notices will let these people know that Medicare prescription drug coverage is coming and that they will get extra help without needing to apply for it.

Disclaimer

This article was prepared as a service to the public and is not intended to grant rights or impose obligations. This article may contain references or links to statutes, regulations, or other policy materials. The information provided is only intended to be a general summary. It is not intended to take the place of either the written law or regulations. We encourage readers to review the specific statutes, regulations and other interpretive materials for a full and accurate statement of their contents.

This summer, the Social Security Administration (SSA) will mail a different letter to other people who do not automatically qualify for the extra help but may be potentially eligible for it. The letter will include an application that people can fill out and return to find out if they qualify for extra help paying for a Medicare prescription drug plan.

This letter can be viewed at <http://www.ssa.gov/organizations/medicareoutreach2> on the Social Security Administration website. Select "Application for Help with Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Costs."

Information Tool Available on Web

The new prescription drug coverage informational tool, "Learn About Your Medicare Prescription Coverage Options" was recently released on <http://www.medicare.gov>. This awareness tool for people with Medicare provides information about what is coming and what actions they will need to take with regard to the new prescription drug coverage.

By answering two or three questions, the individual will be provided with information such as: eligibility for extra help for people with limited income and resources, customized information based on the individual's current coverage, as well as educational resources and links to publications about the new drug coverage.

Summary

CMS understands the pressure on your clinical time with patients, which is why we ask that you inform your Medicare patients that this new prescription drug coverage could be valuable to them and worth exploring. In addition to the products discussed in this article, CMS plans to provide you with access to information you could make available to your patients in your offices.

Additional Information

More information on provider education and outreach regarding drug coverage can be found at <http://www.cms.gov/Outreach-and-Education/Medicare-Learning-Network-MLN/MLNProducts/index.html> on the CMS website.

Detailed drug coverage information for CMS partners and advocates for people with Medicare can be found at <http://www.cms.gov/Outreach-and-Education/Outreach/Partnerships/index.html> on the CMS website.

You can also find additional information regarding prescription drug plans at <http://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Prescription-Drug-Coverage/PrescriptionDrugCovGenIn/index.html> on the CMS website.

Further information on CMS implementation of the Medicare Modernization Act (MMA) can be found at <http://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Prescription-Drug-Coverage/PrescriptionDrugCovContra/downloads/FormularyGuidance.pdf> on the CMS website.

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