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DATE: November 19, 2010

TO: Medicare Advantage Organizations

FROM: Michael Crochunis, Acting Director
Medicare Enrollment & Appeals Group

RE: Establishing a Special Election Period (SEP) to Enroll in 5-star Medicare Advantage Plans in Plan Year 2012

Beginning in 2012, CMS will establish an SEP to allow Medicare beneficiaries eligible for Medicare Advantage (MA) plans to enroll in 5-star MA plans at any point during the year. CMS is exercising its existing statutory authority under Section 1851(e)(4)(D) of the Social Security Act to establish this special election period.

The creation of this SEP is part of CMS' overall quality effort, combined with the quality bonus payment demonstration, to give MA plans greater incentive to achieve 5-star status. Plan ratings for the 2012 plan year will be published in the fall of 2011, prior to the annual open enrollment period.

Who will be eligible for this SEP?

- Beneficiaries enrolled in MA plans with a star rating of 4.5 or less
- Beneficiaries who are enrolled in Original Medicare and meet the eligibility requirements for Medicare Advantage

Part D status is not a factor in determining eligibility for this SEP.

Similar to other SEPs, CMS is proposing to allow eligible individuals to enroll in 5-star MA plans through 1-800-MEDICARE, Medicare.gov, or directly through the 5-star plans. Effective dates for enrollments made under this SEP will be the first of the month following the month the enrollment request is received.

More detailed information, including information about the enrollment process, will be forthcoming in the 2012 CMS Call Letter, which will be released in Spring 2011.

If you have any questions concerning this memorandum, please contact Jim Canavan at 410-786-5223 or James.Canavan@cms.hhs.gov.