

MEDICARE NEWS

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CMS SENDS MEDICARE MAILING TO BENEFICIARIES TO EDUCATE THEM ON THE NEW AFFORDABLE CARE ACT AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR MEDICARE

Medicare beneficiaries will soon receive important information in the mail about the immediate benefits they may see from the enactment of the Affordable Care Act.

The mailing from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), which will be available in both English and Spanish, outlines key provisions of the Affordable Care Act that are important for people with Medicare as well as members of their families.

Medicare mails the Medicare & You handbook to all beneficiary households every fall to provide people with Medicare the most up to date information about changes in Medicare. These annual mailings have from time to time been supplemented with additional mailings that inform beneficiaries about major changes in the law that significantly affect Medicare.

“It’s important that our Medicare beneficiaries get facts about this important new law timely so they can learn what stays the same and what will change and improve in terms of their benefits,” said Marilyn Tavenner, acting CMS administrator. “As a trusted resource for beneficiaries and their families, we believe that this information will help to inform them about the Affordable Care Act and remind them to be on the alert for any scams asking for personal information. CMS has learned from implementing previous major pieces of health reform legislation like Medicare Part D that unfortunately new opportunities for Medicare beneficiaries also bring new opportunities for scam artists to try and defraud seniors.”

“The new law not only strengthens Medicare, but also ensures the guaranteed benefits that beneficiaries have come to rely upon don’t change,” said Tavenner. “CMS is viewed by beneficiaries as the official and trusted source of information, so it is critical that we reach out quickly to ensure beneficiaries understand their Medicare coverage and how it will improve.”

The first benefit that several million Medicare beneficiaries will receive as a result of the passage of the new law is a one-time check for \$250, if they enter the Part D donut hole and are not eligible for Medicare Extra Help. The donut hole is the period in the prescription drug benefit in which the beneficiary pays 100 percent of the cost of their drugs until they hit the catastrophic coverage.

“The \$250 check that some beneficiaries will soon see in the mail following the brochure for all Medicare beneficiaries is the first step towards the closing of the coverage gap,” said Tavenner. “Next year, all beneficiaries who enter the gap will get a 50 percent discount for covered brand name Part D drugs, and by 2020 will no longer have a gap in coverage.”

In addition to the rebate check, the new mailing to beneficiaries outlines other benefits available under the Affordable Care Act. Beginning next year, the Affordable Care Act ensures that Medicare beneficiaries will get preventive care services like colorectal cancer screening and mammograms without cost-sharing, in addition to an annual “wellness visit.” The law also includes new tools to help fight fraud by helping Medicare crack down on criminals who are seeking to scam seniors and steal taxpayer dollars.

Because Medicare is a trusted resource for beneficiaries and their family members, the mailing encourages them to log on to www.medicare.gov or call 1-800-MEDICARE to get their questions about Medicare or the Affordable Care Act answered.

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