

# The Beacon

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## SOCIAL SECURITY & MEDICARE

### **Social Security Announces 3.6% Cost of Living Increase**

Social Security has announced that beneficiaries (including SSI recipients) will receive a 3.6% cost of living (COLA) increase in 2012. The press release from SSA is attached. Any changes to Medicare premiums for 2012 will be released shortly.

### **One 5-Star Plan for Massachusetts in 2012**

CMS has released the 5-star quality ratings. Only one Massachusetts plan has earned the 5-star rating for 2012—Health New England's MA-PD plan, available in Hampden, Hampshire, and Franklin counties. If a plan has a 5-star rating, people with Medicare can use the new 5-star Special Enrollment Period (SEP) to enroll in that plan outside an enrollment period.

Nationwide, only thirteen plans received a 5-star rating:

- ◆ 9 Medicare Advantage health plans with prescription drug coverage
- ◆ 2 Medicare Advantage health plans
- ◆ 2 Prescription Drug Plans

### **National Medicare Training Program Webinar**

The National Medicare Training Program (NMTP) is hosting a series of webinars for people new to Medicare or those wanting a refresher. Those who complete the webinars will earn 0.4 CEU's through the International Association for Continuing Education and Training. The webinars will cover

- ◆ Part A
- ◆ Part B
- ◆ Part C (Medicare Advantage)
- ◆ Part D
- ◆ Current Medicare topics
- ◆ A review of CMS resources for practical application

Webinar sessions will be held from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM on the following dates:

- ◆ November 1, 2011 and November 2, 2011
- ◆ March 6, 2012 and March 7, 2012
- ◆ June 5, 2012 and June 6, 2012
- ◆ October 2, 2012 and October 3, 2012

You can register for the November session [here](#).

### **CMS Consumer Alert**

CMS has recently become aware of a website that has the appearance of being an official government website for the Pre-Existing Condition Insurance Plan. This new website - <http://preexistingconditioninsuranceplan.com> - is not maintained by any government programs and consumers are strongly urged not to submit any personal information requested by this website under the assumption that it is a government website. CMS is taking the appropriate steps to protect consumers from being misled.

### **New Preventive Benefits for Alcohol Misuse and Depression**

CMS has announced two new preventive benefits available to Medicare Beneficiaries. The first is an annual alcohol misuse screening performed in a primary care setting. If the beneficiary screens positive for misuse, he/she is allotted up to 4 behavioral counseling sessions per year conducted by the primary care provider. The second benefit is an annual depression screening. Similarly, this screening must also be performed by a primary care provider. The full CMS decision memos for each benefit are attached.

## MEDICARE ADVANTAGE & PRESCRIPTION DRUG PLANS

### **Blue Cross and Blue Shield Prescription Coverage at Walgreens**

Walgreens will not be an in-network pharmacy provider for the BCBS Medicare Advantage plans effective January 1, 2012. Therefore, members of the Medicare HMO Blue PlusRx (HMO), Medicare HMO Blue ValueRx (HMO), and Medicare PPO Blue PlusRx (PPO) will have to pay 100% of their prescription costs if they use a Walgreens pharmacy. However, members of BCBS's Prescription Drug Plans—Blue MedicareRx Premier and Blue MedicareRx Value Plus—will still have prescription drug coverage at Walgreens.

### **Humana Outreach during Open Enrollment**

Humana has provided us with a copy of their outreach presentation along with their sales events scheduled at Walmarts during open enrollment. These documents are attached.

### **Tufts Community Sales Meetings**

Tufts has released a calendar of their upcoming sales meetings in Massachusetts. Please consult the attached flyer if you would like to attend one of these events.

## MASSHEALTH & THE CONNECTOR

### **Prescription Co-pays Increased for Commonwealth Care**

Effective October 1, 2011, Commonwealth Care Plan Type I members had their prescription co-payments increased. These co-payments rose from \$3 to \$3.65.

### **Commonwealth Care Premium Billing Address Change**

Starting in November, Commonwealth Care payments must be sent to a new Massachusetts address. Members are being notified by mail and email. To avoid delays in processing, members should make sure to send payments to the new address:

Commonwealth Care  
P.O. Box 849175  
Boston, MA 02284-9175

Members who use their banks' online bill pay services must change the Commonwealth Care address with their banks. Members who pay by EFT on MAhealthconnector.org or use the coupon and envelope provided don't need to do anything different.

## MISCELLANEOUS

### **Chronic Disease Self Management Program**

Chances are your organization is already offering CDSMP workshops. Your local CDSMP can provide information for participants about SHINE and you can refer your clients to these healthy aging workshops. The attached flyer can be used to refer SHINE clients to CDSMP after your counseling is finished. If you want a version of the flyer that you can customize to your own needs, please email [ana.karchmer@state.ma.us](mailto:ana.karchmer@state.ma.us).

### **Dental Plans Available in Massachusetts**

The Division of Insurance posts a list of all DOI approved dental plans available in Massachusetts. With the recent announcement of a new Blue Cross and Blue Shield dental plan for seniors, we would like to share this comprehensive list. Available plans can be found [here](#).

### **LGBT Aging Project's 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

The LGBT Aging Project is celebrating 10 years of connecting LGBT seniors and caregivers to the programs, services and protections they need. Their special anniversary edition of their newsletter is attached, which includes information about their anniversary gala on November 16<sup>th</sup> in Cambridge, MA.

### **SNAP Application Assistance Scams**

The Food and Nutrition Service has identified a recent increase in scams surrounding SNAP (food stamp) application assistance for elders. These scams are often related to online ads offering assistance in applying for SNAP that then solicit credit card information from the victim.

## THE SHINE SPOTLIGHT

### **Seeking Nominations!**

The SHINE Spotlight shares interesting stories or notable achievements of the many dedicated SHINE Counselors across the state. To nominate a SHINE Counselor to be featured in this section, contact Chris Ciano at [christopher.ciano@state.ma.us](mailto:christopher.ciano@state.ma.us).

## ATTACHMENTS

- ◆ SSA COLA increase 2012
- ◆ CMS decision memo on alcohol misuse benefit
- ◆ CMS decision memo on depression benefit
- ◆ SHINE-CDSMP flyer
- ◆ LGBT Aging Project's Newsletter
- ◆ Humana OEP presentation
- ◆ Humana Walmart Sales Events
- ◆ Tufts Community Sales Meetings