



Medicare Open Enrollment Period October 15 – December 7

RALEIGH— Change is a part of everyday life and change may be necessary to get the most out of your health care benefits. Each year during the Open Enrollment Period, Medicare beneficiaries have the opportunity to compare and evaluate their current plans and make changes as necessary. Just as your health needs may change from year to year, so may the benefits and costs of your health plan. By comparing plans during the Open Enrollment Period, Medicare beneficiaries can save money and make certain that their 2017 plan will be the best for their needs.

The Open Enrollment Period begins on Oct. 15 and runs for 7 weeks to give you enough time to review and make changes to your Medicare coverage. All changes must be made by Dec. 7 to ensure that your coverage can begin without interruption on Jan. 1.

“Many Medicare beneficiaries assume that the plan they are in this year will also work for them in the coming year and that is not always the case,” said North Carolina Insurance Commissioner Wayne Goodwin. “The staff from SHIIP, the Seniors’ Health Insurance Information Program, are available to help over the phone or in-person in all 100 counties in North Carolina.”

SHIIP is a division of the North Carolina Department of Insurance and offers free, unbiased information about Medicare, Medicare prescription drug coverage, Medicare Advantage, long-term care insurance and other health insurance issues. In addition to helping Medicare beneficiaries compare and enroll in plans during the Open Enrollment Period, SHIIP counselors can help people find out if they are eligible for Medicare cost savings programs.

Here are some of the ways to review and compare plans available for 2017:

- Get one-on-one help from your local SHIIP office by calling 828-659-0821 at McDowell Senior Center.
- Visit www.medicare.gov/find-a-plan to compare your current coverage with all of the options that are available in your area, and enroll in a new plan if you decide to make a change.
- Review the Medicare & You handbook. It was mailed to people with Medicare in September.
- Call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) 24-hours a day, seven days a week, to find out more about your coverage options. TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048.

For more information about SHIIP and the Medicare Open Enrollment Period, call 1-855-408-1212 or visit www.ncshiip.com.