



SHIIP NEWS

Mission Health and BCBSNC

Mission Health based in Asheville announced today that it is terminating its contract with BCBSNC effective October 5, 2017. This contract termination will affect BCBSNC members who have commercial based plans as well as Medicare Advantage members.

All Mission Health hospitals, outpatient facilities, and most physicians will be considered out of network at that time. Medicare beneficiaries will need to contact their provider to determine if this contract termination will affect them. Medicare beneficiaries who are members of a HMO plan will need to find physicians who will accept their plan because they have no out of network coverage options. Beneficiaries who are enrolled in a PPO will have the option to continue to see their physicians but will face higher out of pocket cost.

We will keep you posted of any changes regarding this contract termination.

New Medicare Identification Numbers

The Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015 requires the removal of Social Security Numbers from all Medicare cards. Beginning April 2018, new Medicare cards will begin to be mailed to Medicare beneficiaries. The purpose of this

change is to better protect the private health care information, financial information, federal health care benefit, and service payments of Medicare beneficiaries.

The new Medicare Beneficiary Identifier (MBI) will have a new Non-Intelligent Unique Identifier consisting of 11 characters. Positions 2, 5, 8, and 9 will always be alphabetic. Below is an example of what the new numbering system will look like.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) are currently working with providers to make sure they are prepared for the changes to have as seamless transition as possible when the new cards are issued.

We too need to begin to prepare our beneficiaries for this transition. Below is a list of ways to help them better understand this process.

Make them aware of the changes and to anticipate the receipt of a new Medicare card in the mail in April.

Remind them to make sure that the address on record with CMS and SSA is current.

Remind them to be aware of scammers trying to obtain their new number.

It is important for them to know that there is no cost for the new card.

Medicare will never call and ask your number because they already have it.

Preserve Funding for SHIIPs

The Senate Appropriations Committee's and the President's budgets propose a 100% cut in funding for State Health Insurance Assistance Programs (SHIP). This would have a devastating impact on **NCSHIIP**, the **North Carolina Seniors' Health Insurance Information Program** and its ability to assist the state's 1.8 million Medicare beneficiaries. This potential cut comes at a time when the number of people eligible for Medicare is growing and the Medicare program is becoming increasingly complex. Not funding this program may eliminate the best and most reliable free and local resource that Medicare beneficiaries have in North Carolina. Consumers would be forced to utilize 1-800-MEDICARE which is not equipped to handle the call volume or to seek assistance from other sources who may not be reliable.

The House of Representatives is scheduled to debate funding for Health and Human Services programs in the next week or so. Funding for SHIIPs would be included in these budget debates. If the House does not fund this program it may be very difficult to get funding from any other source, therefore the future of this program would be uncertain.

Please help us to not let this happen!

NCSHIIP Activities in 2016:

Helped North Carolina Medicare beneficiaries save \$44.3 million.

Counseled more than 105,000 Medicare beneficiaries.

Served almost **21,000** Medicare beneficiaries with disabilities.

Counseled more than **29,000** beneficiaries with incomes below 150% of federal poverty level.

NCSHIIP is:

Unique. NCSHIIP is the only organization in the state that provides unbiased, accurate, highly-personalized one-on-one counseling about Medicare by phone and in-person in all 100 counties in North Carolina.

Effective. NCSHIIP helped save North Carolinians more than **\$44.3 million** on Medicare coverage and prescription drugs in 2016 alone. **This is close to the \$52 million that is appropriated for all SHIPs nationwide** that is being proposed for elimination in the Senate's and the President's Budgets.

Cost-efficient. NCSHIIP uses a small paid staff and a network of approximately 1,000 trained volunteer counselors to meet the needs of North Carolina's 1.8 million Medicare beneficiaries.

Dependable. Local, state and federal agencies, members of the

state legislature, members of Congress and their staff, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the Social Security Administration and other sources routinely refer beneficiaries to NCSHIIP. Beneficiaries often need help that cannot be provided by 1-800-Medicare or through online or printed materials.

With eliminated federal funding, NCSHIIP would be severely impacted and would not be able to provide the same high level of service, and partner agencies will have to find new ways to help beneficiaries who need Medicare information and counseling.