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Affordable Care Act Provides New Resources for Medicare Outreach Efforts

SHIP programs to help Medicare beneficiaries understand new benefits and anti-fraud initiatives created under the Affordable Care Act

Today, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) announced new requirements for State Health Insurance Assistance Programs (SHIP) grants to increase beneficiaries' awareness about certain provisions in the Affordable Care Act, including new Medicare prevention and wellness benefits, fraud initiatives, including how beneficiaries can help with fraud detection and reporting, and annual election period changes for 2011.

SHIPs are a key partner in our efforts to ensure that seniors and persons with disabilities who rely on Medicare are aware of the new benefits available to them under the Affordable Care Act," said CMS Administrator Donald Berwick, M.D.

These new requirements are part of the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) Basic Grant Announcement and Grant Renewal Application for Fiscal Year (FY) 2011. The FY 2011

grants are continuation grants available to the 54 existing SHIP organizations in the fifty States and territories. CMS anticipates that all SHIPs will participate in this grant renewal process.

Grant renewals will allow SHIPs to expand and develop new strategies to strengthen their community-based and grassroots networks. The SHIPs provide personalized, one-on-one counseling, information, education and outreach to help people understand their new Medicare benefits.

SHIPs will continue to be available to help all beneficiaries and their caregivers make informed decisions. The grants will provide additional support for targeted outreach to individuals with disabilities, those with limited or low income who may be eligible for the low income subsidy; individuals with limited English proficiency; and those from diverse racial and ethnic groups to ensure that these populations take full advantage of their Medicare benefits.

In FY 2010, CMS made \$45 million in direct SHIP grants and support contracts available. Nearly \$41.6 million in funding was distributed for basic SHIP grant awards, and an additional \$1.5 million in performance awards was distributed. In the grant year ending March 31, 2010, SHIPs reported that they served approximately 5 million people.

Applicants may obtain a copy of the SHIP Basic Grant Announcement and Renewal Application by accessing www.SHIPTalk.org or through www.grantsolutions.gov, which will be posted on December 15, 2010. Responses to the SHIP Grant Renewal Application are due to CMS by February 16, 2011.

In addition to grants, CMS's ongoing support of SHIPs includes training and technical assistance to ensure that their community networks are available to assist people with issues relating to Medicare benefits, and that they are making full use of CMS's customer service resources. More information is available at www.HealthCare.gov, a new web portal made available by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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