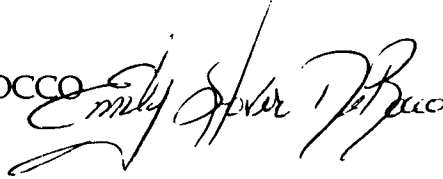


TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT NOTICE	NO. 20-05
	DATE February 1, 2006

TO: ALL STATE WORKFORCE AGENCIES
ALL STATE WORKFORCE LIAISONS
ALL ONE-STOP CAREER CENTER STAFF
SCSEP GRANTEEES

FROM: EMILY STOVER DeROCCO
Assistant Secretary



SUBJECT: New Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage

1. **Purpose.** To help promote the availability of the new Medicare prescription drug coverage through the workforce investment system, provide links to helpful resource materials about the program, and provide contact information for referrals.
2. **References.** TEN 16-04 – Protocol for Serving Older Workers; Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003; Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (P.L. 105-220) Section 134(d)(2); Older Americans Act Amendments of 2000 (P.L. 106-501).
3. **Background.** The Medicare program was created 40 years ago to provide health insurance for people age 65 and over and certain individuals with disabilities under age 65. The original Medicare Plan pays for many health care services and supplies, but it does not pay all of a member’s health care costs. In order to better meet seniors’ needs, on December 8, 2003, the President signed into law the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003 (MMA), which added prescription drug coverage as part of the Medicare program.

The Employment and Training Administration (ETA) is collaborating with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to promote Medicare prescription drug coverage to One-Stop Career Center customers. To ensure timely enrollment of participants, the workforce investment system is strongly encouraged to learn about the program and make materials and other information available to appropriate One-Stop customers. This TEN provides key dates and links to resource materials that may be useful to workforce development professionals in promoting the program. (See the attachment for specific details on the Medicare prescription drug coverage.)

4. **Important Dates To Remember.** The following are the key dates for the Medicare prescription drug coverage enrollment period and when coverage becomes available.

- **November 15, 2005** - Enrollment Period Begins;
- **January 1, 2006** - Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage Begins; and
- **May 15, 2006** - Enrollment Period Ends.

5. **Resources.**

a. **Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services**

Workforce development professionals may obtain information about Medicare prescription drug coverage by visiting www.medicare.gov or by calling the toll free number 1-800-MEDICARE. In addition, the "Medicare and You" handbook is available at www.medicare.gov/spotlights.asp#medicare2006 and may be used to provide valuable information about the program to beneficiaries. Free publications may be ordered through the Partner Center Web site at the following address: pubordering.cms.hhs.gov/maillinglist.

b. **State Health Insurance Providers (SHIP)**

SHIP is a national program that offers one-on-one counseling and assistance to people with Medicare and their families, and can provide information and answer questions on the new Medicare prescription drug coverage. Through federal grants directed to states, SHIP provides free counseling and assistance via telephone and face-to-face interactive sessions, public education presentations and programs, and media activities. To find out how to contact a SHIP counselor, please visit their Web site at www.shiptalk.org. (It is not necessary to register to obtain general information, just click on the "Find a State SHIP" link under the "About SHIP" Menu on the left-hand side of the screen).

c. **Eldercare Locator**

The Eldercare Locator connects older Americans and their caregivers with sources of information on senior services. The service links those who need assistance with state and local area agencies on aging and community-based organizations that serve older adults and their caregivers. To search for an organization in your area that can provide assistance with the Medicare prescription drug coverage benefit, visit their Web site at www.eldercare.gov/Eldercare/Public/medicare.asp.

- d. **Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)**
ETA and CMS are working collaboratively to share information about the Medicare prescription drug coverage with SCSEP program participants. SCSEP grantees will be coordinating with CMS on program locations and will be assisting with the dissemination of information in their local communities. ETA and CMS will also host a Webinar for the over 1,000 local providers on the program, including information on how to order printed materials. In addition, ETA will be mailing information letters to the approximately 100,000 SCSEP participants. Finally, ETA has added a link to www.medicare.gov on the SCSEP home page under "What's New" and will feature profile stories about how the program has helped SCSEP participants.
 - e. **Partner Center Web Site**
The CMS Partner Center Web site at www.cms.hhs.gov/partnerships/ provides a number of resources on the Medicare prescription drug coverage benefit that are helpful to One-Stop Career Centers and can be downloaded as PDF files.
 - f. **Medicare Web Cast Archives**
The Medicare Web cast archives provide an overview of Medicare prescription drug coverage and are accessible through Windows Media Player and Real Player at: cms.archivevideo.com. All archived Web casts will be available through May 2006. The archived versions are closed captioned.
 - g. **Medicare Online Coach**
The Medicare Online Coach is a friendly aide that helps workforce development professionals quickly identify common issues and questions concerning Medicare prescription drug coverage. This information can help workforce development professionals assist One-Stop Career Center customers, such as seniors and individuals with disabilities, who may be eligible to participate in the program. The Coach provides interactive step-by-step instructions to help workforce development professionals find answers or related information by providing direct access to existing resources such as the official Medicare Web site, as well as other government and non-profit resources. The site is available to the public as of November 15, 2005. The Web site address is www.StaffCoach.org/Medicare.
6. **Action Required.** States should to review and share this TEN with local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), One-Stop Career Centers, and other state and local workforce partners, as appropriate. SCSEP grantees should review and share this TEN with local project operators, subgrantees, and other partners, as appropriate. Local WIBs, One-Stop Centers, and SCSEP service providers should peruse all materials related to the Medicare prescription drug coverage benefit to become familiar with the program and promote and share information among One-Stop and SCSEP customers. Local WIBs, One-Stop Career Centers, and SCSEP

service providers may order free publications at pubordering.cms.hhs.gov/maillinglist and distribute enrollment forms to older worker customers and qualifying individuals with disabilities.

7. **Inquiries.** States seeking to obtain more information about this outreach effort may contact their ETA regional office. SCSEP grantees seeking to obtain more information about this outreach effort should contact their Federal Project Officer.
8. **Attachment.** “Introducing Medicare’s New Coverage for Prescription Drugs” Fact Sheet. This document provides basic information and has been translated into additional languages. Further information can be accessed on-line at www.medicare.gov/medicarereform/drugbenefit.asp.

CENTERS FOR MEDICARE & MEDICAID SERVICES

Introducing Medicare's New Coverage for Prescription Drugs



Starting January 1, 2006

Medicare will soon be offering insurance coverage for prescription drugs through Medicare prescription drug plans. Insurance companies and other private companies will work with Medicare to offer these plans. These plans will help you save money on your prescription drug costs. Medical practice has come to rely more and more on new drug therapies to treat chronic conditions and out-of-pocket spending on drugs has increased dramatically.

In order to get this prescription coverage, you must choose and enroll in a Medicare prescription drug plan that meets your needs. Here's how you can get ready to take advantage of this new option.

- Look over your current health insurance coverage. Are prescription drugs covered? What are your out-of-pocket drug costs?
- Keep a list of the name, dosage, and cost of the prescriptions you use. Since different plans will cover different drugs, this will help you choose a plan that meets your prescription needs.
- If you have a limited income, check your mail this summer for an application to get extra help paying for a Medicare prescription drug plan. When you get this application, fill it out, and return it. Millions of people will qualify for a Medicare prescription drug plan with little or no premiums or deductibles, and low copayments. You might be one of them.
- If you have prescription drug coverage through a former employer or union, check with your benefits administrator. Medicare prescription drug coverage may be different for you.
- Read on to learn about Medicare prescription drug plans.

If you don't use a lot of prescription drugs now, you still should consider joining. As we age, most people need prescription drugs to stay healthy. For most people, joining now means you will pay a lower monthly premium than if you wait to join until later.

Who can join?

Anyone with Medicare Part A **and/or** Part B can join a Medicare prescription drug plan offered in their area. If you are in a Medicare Advantage Plan (like an HMO or PPO), your plan may also offer drug coverage.

When can I join?

If you currently have Medicare Part A **and/or** Part B, you can join a Medicare prescription drug plan between November 15, 2005 and May 15, 2006. If you join by December 31, 2005, your Medicare prescription drug plan coverage will begin on January 1, 2006, and you won't miss a day of coverage. If you join after that, your coverage will be effective the first day of the month after the month you join. If you join a Medicare prescription drug plan after May 15, 2006, you are likely to pay a higher monthly premium unless you currently have a drug plan that covers at least as much as a Medicare prescription drug plan. You will have to pay this higher premium as long as you have a Medicare prescription drug plan.

How much does it cost?

Like other insurance, if you join, you will pay a monthly premium (generally around \$37 in 2006) and a yearly deductible (up to \$250 in 2006). You will also pay a part of the cost for your prescriptions, including a copayment or coinsurance. Costs will vary depending on which drug plan you choose. Some plans may offer more coverage and additional drugs for a higher monthly premium. If you have limited income and resources, and qualify for extra help, you may not have to pay a premium or deductible.

When can I get more information?

Detailed information about Medicare prescription drug plans in your area will be available in the fall of 2005. Throughout 2005, Medicare will provide general information to help you get ready, including how to choose and join a plan that meets your needs. **In the fall of 2005,**

- you will get the "Medicare & You 2006" handbook in the mail. It will list the Medicare prescription drug plans available in your area.
- you will be able to get free personalized information at www.medicare.gov on the web, or by calling 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) to help you choose the plan that meets your needs.
- you can get free personalized counseling from your State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP), and other local and community-based organizations. Call 1-800-MEDICARE to get the telephone number of the SHIP nearest you.