



May 22, 2006

Message from the Assistant Secretary

A Special Thank you to the Aging Services Network for their Outstanding Assistance in the Implementation of the Prescription Drug Program of the Medicare Modernization Act

I would like to express my gratitude and thanks to the National Aging Services Network (Aging Services Network) for your grassroots, one-on-one assistance to millions of older adults and their families. The Aging Services Network's partnership with CMS to help in the enrollment process made a significant difference in ensuring access and information for millions of Medicare eligible persons. As a result of these partnerships and action, more than 38 million people with Medicare now have some form of prescription drug coverage, representing more than 90 percent of all Medicare beneficiaries.

Since November 15, 2005, the Department of Health and Human Services and our national partners sponsored over 50,000 Medicare Part D events across the country. Members of the Aging Services Network participated in over 46,000 of these events with more than 40,000 volunteers working Medicare Beneficiaries to choose the right prescription drug program for their needs. This was a truly outstanding effort on everyone's part, and we cannot express enough our appreciation for your incredible work.

As I traveled around the country to be by your side at many of these events, I was touched by your enrollees' stories. Truly, the winners here are older Americans. With this new benefit, people are already seeing savings and now have greater access to preventive services. The ultimate result of this Medicare modernization initiative will be the improved health and the quality of life of Older Americans and persons with disability.

I also want us to remember that this partnership is the beginning of many more collaborations. The time is now to continue this important refocus of our national long-term care and health systems. We have many more opportunities for long-term care change and modernization, and I know I can count on each of you to work within your local communities to further the expansion of choices for better health and wellness of our older Americans. So, again, thank you and God bless you all for your vision, support, compassion and dedication!

Josefina G. Carbonell

Top Story

New Checklist Helps Long-Term Care and Other Residential Facilities Prepare for an Influenza Pandemic

On May 16, HHS Secretary Mike Leavitt announced the release of the "Long-Term Care and Other Residential Facilities Pandemic Influenza Checklist." This tool provides guidance for these facilities to assess and improve their preparedness for responding to pandemic influenza.

"The collaboration of long-term care and other residential facilities with public health agencies will be important in protecting the people living in those facilities if and when a pandemic occurs," Secretary Leavitt said. "These facilities provide vital services for their residents. By working together now, we'll be better equipped to serve these residents and their caregivers in the future."

The new checklist identifies steps that long-term care and other residential facilities can take to prepare for a pandemic, and could be helpful in other types of emergencies. The checklist was developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Preparedness suggestions include:

- Have a structure for planning and decision-making, with a multidisciplinary group created to specifically pandemic influenza preparedness planning.
- Develop a written pandemic influenza plan that identifies the person or persons authorized to implement the plan and the organizational structure to be used.
- Develop a facility communication plan that includes key points of contact such as local and state health department officials, and a person responsible for communicating with staff, residents and families.
- Have a plan to provide education and training to ensure that all personnel, residents and family members of residents understand basic prevention and control measures for pandemic influenza.
- Have an infection control plan in place for managing residents and visitors with pandemic influenza.
- Have a plan to get and use vaccines and antiviral drugs.
- Address issues related to sudden increased needs, such as prioritizing services, staffing and supply shortages, and alternative care for residents who need acute care when hospital beds are unavailable.

The release of this new tool builds on the Administration's overall planning to increase pandemic preparedness. President Bush has outlined a coordinated government strategy that includes the establishment of the new International Partnership on Avian and Pandemic Influenza, stockpiling of vaccines and antiviral medications, expansion of early-warning systems domestically and abroad and new funding and initiatives for local and state level preparedness.

Secretary Leavitt has met with senior officials from all 50 states and has been holding summits with the goal of enhancing state and local preparedness. In addition to today's checklist, Secretary Leavitt has issued preparedness checklists for individuals and families, businesses, state and local health departments, and faith-based and community organizations to aid their pandemic preparedness efforts.

A copy of the "Long-Term Care and Other Residential Facilities Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Checklist" is available at <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/LongTermCareChecklist.html>. Additional pandemic planning information is available online at <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/>.

AoA will continue to post updated information related to pandemic flu planning at: <http://www.aoa.gov/press/preparedness/preparedness.asp>.

AoA News

Older Americans Month

Older Americans Month is celebrated each May to honor and recognize older Americans for the contributions they make to our families, communities, and society. The 2006 Older Americans Month theme – Choices for Independence – reflects the importance of making thoughtful choices that will improve the quality of our lives as we grow older.

The theme of this year's observance reflects the continued commitment of the U.S. Administration on Aging (AoA) to help America prepare for an aging population and the emergence of long-term living as a common experience of life. The theme also serves to support AoA's new initiative, Choices for Independence, which was announced earlier this year. The Initiative focuses on giving people greater control over their lives and providing more support for community living. Essentially, the key focus of the Initiative is to provide consumer choice for the seniors and people with disabilities, improve health access and increase the quality of life for the elderly people, reduce health care costs and reduce the risk of institutionalization.

Helping older adults recognize the benefits of embracing a healthy lifestyle focused on prevention and wellness is vitally important. Healthy aging is about preventing or delaying disease, as well as making informed choices about many aspects of life though out the lifespan. These choices involve living arrangements, family and community resources, planning ahead for one's retirement and long-term care, and decisions about being engaged in social, civic, and leisure activities. All of these choices can contribute to our independence and dignity as we age.

Older adults also for the first time have the choice of prescription drug coverage under Medicare. The new Medicare prescription drug benefit is currently providing immediate help to over 30 million older Americans. AoA and the aging network has worked with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to ensure that our Nation's seniors got the information they needed in order to enroll in this very important benefit before the May 15th deadline.

Other News

Demonstration of Enhanced Human Service Transportation Models: Phase 1—System Development and Design

Federal Register Notice: April 14, 2006 (Volume 71, Number 72, pages 19606-19612)

Agency: Federal Transit Administration/DOT

Action: Notice, request for proposals

This notice is a request for proposals (RFP) for system development and design of enhanced human service transportation models. The USDOT seeks up to 10 local communities to carry out detailed development and design of coordinated human service transportation systems that utilize Intelligent Transportation Systems capabilities. The expected results from Phase 1 include up to 10 "deployment-ready," replicable and scalable system detailed designs for enhanced human service transportation delivery models in communities representing a variety of operational environments and scenarios.

Proposals will be accepted immediately, as of the issue date of this RFP. All proposals must be submitted electronically to Grants.Gov by June 13, 2006, or postmarked by June 13, 2006, for consideration. All potential applicants are advised to begin the Grants.Gov registration process immediately, if they have not previously submitted grant applications through <http://www.Grants.Gov> in order to be able to meet the deadline. For more information please see the Federal Register Notice.

For a copy of the Federal Register Notice visit:

<http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/01jan20061800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2006/E6-5588.htm>

For more information about Aging News, please visit:

<http://www.aoa.gov/press/news/news.asp>

For more information about Health News, please visit:

<http://www.aoa.gov/press/health/health.asp>

To view AoA's Calendar of Events, please visit:

<http://www.aoa.gov/press/events/events.asp>

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About AoA

AoA works with a nationwide network of organizations and service providers to make support services and resources available to older persons and their caregivers. For more information about AoA, please contact us by mail at U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Aging, Washington, DC 20201; by phone at (202) 619-0724; by e-mail at aoainfo@aoa.gov; or visit us on the Web at www.aoa.gov.