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MEDICARE NEWS

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Medicare Announces 2011 Funding for State Health Insurance Programs \$46.5 million to help beneficiaries learn about Medicare

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) today announced that nearly \$46.5 million for basic grant funding will be distributed to State Health Insurance Assistance Programs (SHIPs) on April 1, 2011, to help people with Medicare, and those who care for them, receive information and counseling about their health benefits and choices. These grants are available to the 54 SHIP organizations in the United States and its territories for the funding year that runs from April 1, 2011, through March 31, 2012.

“With these funds, SHIPs will provide counseling to beneficiaries, encouraging them to use the new annual wellness visit and other preventive services that the Affordable Care Act provides at no cost to beneficiaries,” said CMS Administrator Donald Berwick, M.D. “SHIP educational services also help beneficiaries to identify and report suspected Medicare fraud, enhancing the anti-fraud tools provided by the Affordable Care Act.”

These grants are the first of two rounds of funding to be distributed to SHIPs in FY 2011. Performance grants will be distributed to SHIPs in September 2011 based on their performance and accomplishments in the prior grant year. Grant funding 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 Medicare benefits.

Teresa Nino, director of CMS’ Office of External Affairs and Beneficiary Services said, “We all know that early detection and preventive services are an investment in our health. Now, with the Affordable Care Act, we’re supporting that knowledge by making health care accessible to those who are often less likely to receive preventive care. SHIPs and other CMS partners with grassroots connections will use creative methods to inform Medicare beneficiaries, their families and trusted representatives about these services.”

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CMS has established goals that will help to ensure consistency in access to services from SHIPs for people with Medicare benefits and in the quality of the information available to them. For 2011, CMS updated performance measures to better evaluate the quality of SHIPs' services.

CMS will continue to support the SHIPs with training and technical assistance. This will help to ensure that the community networks remain fully capable of accessing and using CMS' 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) telephone information line and regional office resources, as well as the online tools at www.medicare.gov and www.SHIPtalk.org to provide assistance to Medicare beneficiaries.

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