



Get Educated, Get Enrolled **Mental Health America's Medicare Rx Benefit Campaign**

July 11, 2007

WELCOME

Mental Health America's quarterly *Get Educated, Get Enrolled* e-bulletin provides program updates and resources to help mental health consumers, advocates, family members, and providers navigate the Medicare Rx benefit. If you are interested in receiving the e-bulletin, please email shcrinfo@mentalhealthamerica.net.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

Mental Health Parity in Medicare

Access to mental health treatment through the Medicare program has been restricted by outdated and discriminatory policies. One of the primary barriers to mental health care for Medicare beneficiaries is the 50% co-insurance rate imposed on outpatient mental health treatment, instead of the usual 20% co-insurance charged for other outpatient services. Limits on outpatient care in Medicare have resulted in much higher utilization of expensive inpatient care among Medicare beneficiaries than other populations. To learn more about congressional efforts to eliminate this inequity, read Mental Health America's [Capitol Hill Update](#).

Coverage of Mental Health Medications in Medicare Part D

The [Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services](#) (CMS) has a policy requiring Medicare Part D plans to cover "all or substantially all" medications in six key drug categories, including anti-depressants, anti-psychotics, and anti-convulsants. However, not all Part D enrollees in need of these medications have benefited from this policy. We attribute that to a failure by certain prescription drug plans to abide by this CMS policy, which has been established only through sub-regulatory guidance. Clearly, the CMS policy requiring coverage of the six key classes must be strengthened to improve compliance by Part D plans. MHA and other advocates have worked with Senator Gordon Smith (R-OR) and Representative Lloyd Doggett (D-TX) who are developing legislation to make the policy a matter of law. To receive alerts on this and other advocacy issues join [Mental Health America's Advocacy Network](#).

PROGRAM UPDATES

Counseling Medicare Beneficiaries with Mental Health Conditions

State Health Insurance Assistance Program Technical Assistance Program (SHIP TAP)

Attached are two fact sheets developed for local [SHIP](#) directors about the needs of individuals with mental health conditions. The sensitivity and awareness training materials were developed as part of a special pilot project by the [Medicare Ombudsman Center](#). To download the toolkit materials visit [Building Partnerships to Better Serve Beneficiaries with Mental Illness](#) on the CMS website.

Plans are Required to Provide Clear Instructions on Prior Authorization Requirements

A [recent letter from CMS](#) provides clarification that all Medicare Part D plans must provide current and prospective enrollees (or their physician or authorized representative) with information regarding specific prior authorization criteria and other utilization management requirements, and that the information must be made available on a timely basis. **Beneficiaries and providers should call Medicare at 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) if they are not receiving the information needed from their prescription drug plan.**

Cost-Sharing in Medicare Advantage Plans

A recent alert from the [Center for Medicare Advocacy](#) (CMA), entitled [Medicare Cost-Sharing in Medicare Advantage Plans: Who Pays for Dual Eligible's?](#) examines whether individuals who qualify for Medicare and Medicaid are able to access Medicare Part B cost-sharing assistance through the Qualified Medicare Beneficiary program (QMB). Unfortunately many states do not screen all elderly and disabled beneficiaries for QMB eligibility even though it is required. CMA encourages advocates to contact state officials to see if their state screens for QMB eligibility.

Health Prevention Services

Recent [research](#) has illustrated the increased morbidity and mortality rates for individuals with mental health conditions. The startling results point to the need of healthcare systems to address all aspects of health as a fundamental part of care for dual eligible beneficiaries. Prevention services covered by Medicare are outlined in Medicare's [Guide to Prevention Services](#). Beneficiaries can also log onto www.mymedicare.gov to track their prevention services and to schedule annual reminders of which prevention services are available to them.

Marketing Medicare Advantage Plans

The [Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services](#) (CMS) announced that in response to concerns about marketing practices, seven health care sponsors have signed an agreement to voluntarily suspend the marketing of Private-Fee-For-Service (PFFS) plans. This suspension will be lifted only when CMS certifies that the plan has the systems and management controls in place to meet all of the conditions specified in the 2008 Call Letter and the [May 25, 2007 guidance issued by CMS](#). The signatories include: United Healthcare, Humana, Wellcare, Universal American Financial Corporation (Pyramid), Coventry, Sterling, and Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Tennessee.

First Study To Examine the Difficulties Faced by Dual Eligibles with Mental Health Conditions in Shift to Medicare Part D

A [study](#) by the [American Psychiatric Institute for Research and Education](#) is the first to examine the serious difficulties faced by individuals with mental health conditions who are dually eligible for the Medicaid and Medicare programs as they transitioned from Medicaid to Medicare Part D to obtain their medications. According to researchers, 22.3% of the individuals participating in the study discontinued or temporarily stopped taking medication because of prescription drug coverage or management issues.

Survey Finds Medicare Part D Failing People with HIV/AIDS

According to a recent [survey](#) by two leading organizations of HIV medical providers, Medicare Part D is creating major drug access problems for people with HIV/AIDS. Bureaucratic roadblocks, exorbitant co-pays, and plans that fail to cover key drugs were highlighted as leading reasons why people with HIV/AIDS are experiencing problems.

Medicare Part D Covers Many Drugs but Few Brand Names

[News reports](#) highlight results from a recent study of California formularies that revealed that 73% of generic drugs and 6% of brand-name drugs are widely covered by plans. The authors of the study recommend that clinicians should know that few brand-name drugs are widely covered and check coverage before prescribing.

TOOLS & RESOURCES

Tips for Navigating the Medicare Rx Drug Plan Finder

For many, the [Medicare Rx Drug Plan Finder](#) can be very hard to navigate. Visit the [Mental Health Part D](#) website to access step-by-step tips for developing a list of medicines using the Medicare Rx Drug Plan Finder.

New Hotline from Medicare Rights Center

The [Medicare Rights Center](#) (MRC) operates a FREE, dedicated hotline for providers with questions about their clients' Medicare issues. MRC has Medicare experts on hand daily from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. E.T. to offer clear, accurate guidance on the intricacies of Part D, Medicare Savings Programs, in-patient hospital care and much more. **For assistance, dial 877-RxHelp-0 (877-794-3510.)**

Resources from SHIP Director's Conference

The 2007 SHIP Director's Conference was recently held in Arlington, Virginia. The program included information and resources for SHIP directors on education and outreach initiatives, and new Medicare products, programs and initiatives. The [conference website](#) features materials from each of the workshops including:

- Fulfilling the Promise: Finding and Enrolling People in the Medicare Part D Extra Help
- The Expanding Universe of Outreach for MSP and Extra Help to Medicare members
- Extra Help Outreach: Where Are We Now and Where Do We Go From Here?
- A Technical Assistance Model for State Programs with Local Counselors

20 Tips to Help Prevent Medical Errors

Medical errors are one of the nation's leading causes of death and injury. Information from the [Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality \(AHRQ\)](#) points to Institute of Medicine estimates that as many as 44,000 to 98,000 people die in U.S. hospitals each year as the result of medical errors. Access [AHRQ's patient fact sheet](#) to learn how we can all prevent medical errors.

Looking for the Latest Research?

In addition to subscribing to Mental Health America's [Mental Health in the Headlines](#) for the latest news and research headlines, a vast array of information is available from the [National Institute of Mental Health \(NIMH\)](#). NIMH is one of 27 components of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Federal government's principal biomedical and behavioral research agency. NIH 's website includes research, news, and health information on a broad range of mental health and substance use issues.

Mental Health America Resources

To access archived versions of the e-bulletin or for further information on the Medicare Rx benefit, visit <http://www1.nmha.org/federal/MedicarePrescriptionDrugBenefit.cfm>. To order copies of the [Medicare Rx Consumer Workbook](#) for community outreach and education activities, email your request to shcrinfo@mentalhealthamerica.net.

The *Get Educated, Get Enrolled* e-bulletin is a project of [Mental Health America](#), the country's oldest and largest nonprofit organization dedicated to helping ALL people live mentally healthier lives. To make a donation in memory of a friend or loved one, or to post a remembrance on our online memorial wall, visit Mental Health America's [Bell of Hope memorial](#).