



## ***Get Educated, Get Enrolled*** **NMHA's Medicare Rx Benefit Campaign**

January 18, 2006

### **Welcome**

The National Mental Health Association is a leading voice in ensuring that the scope and implementation of the Medicare Rx benefit meets the needs of beneficiaries with mental health disorders, particularly those who are dual eligibles. To help consumers and advocates with enrollment, NMHA has created the "*Get Educated, Get Enrolled*" Medicare Rx Benefit Campaign. As part of the campaign, we will send out regular email bulletins with program updates and new resources. Please forward the bulletin to others in your community and encourage them to subscribe by emailing [shcrinfo@nmha.org](mailto:shcrinfo@nmha.org).

### **Countdown**

117 days until the end of the initial enrollment period (May 15, 2006)

### **Tools You Can Use**

#### **CMS Conference Call to address Medicare Part D and Mental Health/Substance Abuse Medications**

On Thursday, January 19, 2006, CMS will host a conference call with the Chief Medical Officer of CMS, Dr. Jeffrey Kellman on issues related to obtaining Mental Health and Substance Abuse medications. The agenda will include a status update from CMS and then questions from participants. All case managers, nurses, psychiatrists, consumers, family members and office medications managers are encouraged to participate.

Date: Thursday, January 19, 2006

Time: 2:00 PM ET

Toll Free #: 800-619-2457

Passcode: Part D

#### **Early Problems Posed at Pharmacies; Raise Concerns for Advocates**

Media has focused attention on the many problems individuals have encountered as they attempt to enroll or access their medications through the Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit. Although some of these problems are related to data and data systems, NMHA continues to be concerned about individuals across the country that are being denied their medications due to inability to verify enrollment, pharmacy refusal to dispense 30-day transition supplies of medications or waive co-payments, formularies that don't comply with the "all or substantially all" guidance, and automatic enrollments in Medicare Advantage Plans that leave individuals without adequate access to mental health services.

#### **What to do if you or other individuals are encountering problems:**

- Contact NMHA (1-800-969-NMHA(6642) or [shcrinfo@nmha.org](mailto:shcrinfo@nmha.org))

- Contact Medicaid offices to report problems with individuals who are dual eligible. The state may have set up a safety net program during the transition period.
- Contact the CMS' Regional Office Part D Assistance Center listed in the attached document. (*Attachment: CMS Regional Office Part D Assistance Center*)

### **Top Messages for Consumers About Part D**

As the initial implementation continues, individuals may experience difficulties at the pharmacy or with verifying plan enrollment information. Below are key messages and tips for consumers. MHAs may want to publish these in your newsletters, post them on websites, share them with information & referral teams and use them in media interviews in the coming weeks.

1. **Be Prepared.** Bring photo identification, Medicare and/or Medicaid cards and any letters from the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) or your prescription drug plan. This will help the pharmacist verify your eligibility and provide your medications.
2. **Verify Your Enrollment.** If you have no paperwork but have been covered by Medicaid and Medicare (dual eligible), verify the plan you are enrolled in by calling 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) or online at [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov). Ask a family member, friend, or your local MHA for assistance if you need it.
3. **Duals Can Enroll at the Pharmacy.** If you are not enrolled in a plan and have been covered by Medicaid and Medicare, you can enroll in Wellpoint – a national prescription drug plan – at your pharmacy if you agree to be enrolled in that plan. After you get your medications, make sure Wellpoint covers all your medication needs and switch plans if necessary.
4. **Ask For Your “Transition Supply.”** You are allowed a 30-day supply of your medication without prior authorization or the need for an exception. This should happen automatically. If the pharmacist refuses to refill your prescription for any reason, ask for the one-time 30-day refill.
5. **Ask The Pharmacist To Waive Co-payments.** If you have a limited income or have been covered by Medicaid and Medicare, you may request that the pharmacist waive the co-payments. Pharmacists are not required to do so and may refuse to dispense medications without it.
6. **File An Exception.** If your medication is not covered by your plan, you and your doctor should file an exception request to have coverage continued. Plans must respond to your request within 72 hours (24 hours in an emergency).
7. **Seek Help.** Call the National Mental Health Association hotline with any additional problems or questions at 1-800-969-6642. Notify your doctor and/or case manager if you are denied your medications.

### **Open Letter from Dr. McClellan**

Attached is a letter from Dr. Mark McClellan providing information on some of the efforts CMS is undertaking to address the difficulty dual eligible beneficiaries are experiencing with the implementation of the Medicare Rx benefit. (*Attachments: partnerletter1213.DOC*)

### **CMS Transition Requirements**

Last week CMS sent Part D plans clarification on the Medicare Part D transition requirements. The documents are a good resource for those working with consumers who are experiencing difficulty accessing their medications at the pharmacy or are being denied by a Part D plan. In addition, CMS has developed a [What If Scenario](#) for pharmacist. (*Attachments: Transition Policy Reminder. PDF, Dual one pager.DOC*)

### **Medicare Ombudsman**

- The [Office of the Medicare Beneficiary Ombudsman](#) (OMO) was established in 2005 as part of the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement and Modernization Act of 2003. Soon the Office of the Medicare Ombudsman will provide a link on [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) that will allow individuals to ask questions and submit complaints about Medicare. In the meantime, if individuals have questions they should contact their CMS Regional Office Part D Assistance Center listed in the attached document. (*Attachment: CMS Regional Office Part D Assistance Center*)

### **Medicare Rx Coverage Workbook for Mental Health Consumers**

The NMHA Medicare Rx Consumer Workbook is helping thousands of Americans with Medicare enroll in the new Medicare prescription drug program. To obtain copies in either English or Spanish:

- Individuals may request a free copy of the workbook through the [NMHA Resource Center](#), 1-800-969-NMHA(6642);
- Download the PDF version at [www.nmha.org/medicare](http://www.nmha.org/medicare); or
- Order larger quantities of the English version to share with Medicare beneficiaries by emailing NMHA at [shcrinfo@nmha.org](mailto:shcrinfo@nmha.org).

### **In the Community**

- **NMHA Conference Call** – On Tuesday, January 31, 2006, NMHA will host a conference call listening session for MHAs and mental health advocates to share their experiences with the implementation of the Medicare Rx program. Please RSVP to [shcrinfo@nmha.org](mailto:shcrinfo@nmha.org)  
Date: Tuesday, January 31, 2006  
Time: 2:00 PM EST  
Toll Free #: 1-800-514-4821  
Participant Code: 586 495
- The [MHA in North Carolina](#) will host an information session on the Medicare prescription drug benefit on Thursday, January 26<sup>th</sup> from 7:00 – 9:00 PM at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Raleigh, MHA in Wake County. The program is free and open to the public and is designed for family members, consumers, and others in the mental health community. To register, email [jfurst@mhancmail.org](mailto:jfurst@mhancmail.org).

If you would like to share local activities in your area, please [email us](#) and let us know what events you're organizing. You may also post your event at <http://www.nmha.org/calendar/>

### **In the News**

#### **[HHS announces that 24 million individuals now have prescription drug coverage](#)**

HHS Secretary Mike Leavitt announced that nearly 24 million seniors and people with disabilities now have prescription drug coverage, including more than 2.6 million Medicare beneficiaries who signed up for the new stand-alone coverage in the last 30 days.

[At Least Four States Take Action To Ensure Access to Medications for Medicare Beneficiaries](#)

Governments in at least four states last week took legislative action to address concerns that poor individuals have been unable to obtain needed medications since the Medicare drug benefit began on Jan. 1, the [New York Times](#) reports.

*Get Educated, Get Enrolled* e-bulletin is a project of the [National Mental Health Association](#), the country's oldest and largest nonprofit organization addressing all aspects of mental health and mental illness. To subscribe, email us at [shcinfo@nmha.org](mailto:shcinfo@nmha.org). To access archived versions of the e-bulletin or for further information on the Medicare Rx benefit, go to <http://www.nmha.org/medicare>.