

Today the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) announced that Medicare beneficiaries enrolled in Medicare health and prescription drug plans will continue to have a wide range of plan options in 2010, and those beneficiaries who decide to change plans should find choosing a new plan simpler than in previous years. The same percentage of Medicare beneficiaries who have access to a Medicare Advantage plan today (99.9 percent) will have access to a Medicare Advantage plan in 2010. In addition, all Medicare beneficiaries will have many prescription drug plans from which to choose. Plan marketing begins today.

In 2010, nearly all beneficiaries will have access to a Medicare Advantage plan, most of which offer prescription drug coverage. Only 1.5 percent of all Medicare beneficiaries (and approximately seven percent of beneficiaries enrolled in Medicare Advantage plans) will need to choose a new health plan or Original Medicare in 2010 because their current plan announced earlier this year it would not renew in 2010. Most of these plans are private fee-for-service (PFFS) plans that made their business decisions to exit the program. These business decisions have been previously announced by the plan sponsors.

CMS also implemented a comprehensive review of plans that served less than 100 enrollees, had been in operation less than two years and were not serving a special population, such as beneficiaries enrolled in special needs plans. CMS also identified plans offered by the same sponsor with similar benefits – plans that made it hard for beneficiaries to distinguish differences between the plan offerings. Consistent with its 2010 Call Letter issued in March 2009, CMS worked collaboratively with plan sponsors to reduce the number of these low enrollment and duplicative plans while continuing to ensure beneficiaries had access to a range of plans.

Beneficiaries should receive their 2010 *Medicare & You* handbook and find updated information at www.medicare.gov and 1-800-Medicare in mid-October. Users of the Medicare Plan Finder, available at www.Medciare.gov, will be able to compare plans' quality summary rating from the previous year, identify which drugs may or may not be on a plan's formulary or be restricted, and compare the cost ranges for plans available in their community. In addition, Medicare has joined forces with thousands of organizations and individuals across the country, including local State Health Insurance Assistance Programs (SHIPs), to assist in beneficiary decision-making.

Additional Resources are available at the following links:

National press release: http://www.cms.hhs.gov/apps/media/press_releases.asp

State-by-State Fact Sheets: <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/center/openenrollment.asp>

List of 2010 plan options, containing plan names and limited plan cost information: <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/PrescriptionDrugCovGenIn/>