



## Seniors' Health Insurance Information Program

Insurance Commissioner Wayne Goodwin

# NEWS

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### **Medicare Annual Election Period is Oct. 15- Dec. 7**

**RALEIGH**— Your health needs change from year to year, and the benefits and costs of your health plan may change each year, too. That's why it's important to evaluate your Medicare choices. The Annual Election Period is the one time of year when *all* people with Medicare can see what new benefits Medicare has to offer and make changes to their coverage.

There's never been a better time to check out Medicare coverage. There are new benefits available for all people with Medicare, whether you choose Original Medicare or a Medicare Advantage plan, including lower prescription costs, wellness visits and preventive care. Take advantage of the Annual Election Period, and you may be able to save money, improve your coverage or both.

The Annual Election Period starts on Oct. 15—and lasts seven full weeks—to give you enough time to review and make changes to your coverage. Also, you will need to make your final selection for next year's Medicare coverage by Dec. 7. This will ensure that Medicare has enough time to process your choice so your coverage can begin without interruption on Jan. 1.

It's worth it to take the time to review and compare, but you don't have to do it alone. Remember that representatives from Medicare and SHIIP, the Seniors' Health Insurance Information Program, are available to help.

- Visit [www.medicare.gov/find-a-plan](http://www.medicare.gov/find-a-plan) to compare your current coverage with all of the options that are available in your area, and enroll in a new plan if you decide to make a change.
- Call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) 24-hours a day, seven days a week, to find out more about your coverage options. TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048.
- Review the Medicare & You 2012 handbook. It is mailed to people with Medicare in September.
- Get one-on-one help from SHIIP, the Seniors' Health Insurance Information Program, by calling 1-800-443-9354, Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

SHIIP is a division of the North Carolina Department of Insurance and can assist anyone with questions about Medicare Part D coverage information and enrollment. Trained SHIIP counselors are available for one-on-one counseling appointments in all 100 North Carolina counties. For more information, contact SHIIP at 1-800-443-9354 or visit [www.ncshiip.com](http://www.ncshiip.com).