



Medicare: Today's Issue

June 18, 2004

BETTER BENEFITS – MORE CHOICES

Good News about the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement and Modernization Act of 2003!

Secretary Thompson Urges Family to Help Dad Save Money on His Drug Costs by Calling 1-800 MEDICARE or visiting Medicare Website

HHS Released the Following Information in a Press Release Today

- ❖ This year for Father's Day, HHS Secretary Tommy G. Thompson urges families to give their dads who are Medicare beneficiaries the gift of savings on prescription drugs by helping them pursue Medicare-approved drug discount cards.
- ❖ Secretary Thompson said families can help their fathers compare cards by going to the price comparison Web site at www.medicare.gov or calling 1-800 MEDICARE, then help their fathers choose a card that's right for them. Medicare has on its Web site a tip sheet for caregivers to help a loved one with Medicare compare cards and choose. The tip sheet to help people make a choice is available at <http://www.medicare.gov/Publications/Pubs/pdf/11071.pdf>.
- ❖ "Dad taught us the value of a buck," Secretary Thompson said. "This Father's Day show him that you remember his lessons by helping him save on prescription medicines with a Medicare-approved drug discount card. You may be able to help your father save 10 to 25 percent or more on the costs of his prescription drugs. If your father has a lower income, he may also be eligible for an additional \$600 to help pay for his prescription medicines, a valuable benefit."
- ❖ "Help your father compare cards and choose one that best meets his needs by going to www.medicare.gov or calling 1-800-MEDICARE. While you're at it, see if your mom would like some help too."
- ❖ Low-income beneficiaries may also receive a credit of up to \$600 each year in 2004 and 2005 to help pay for their prescriptions.
- ❖ There are three simple steps in signing up for a Medicare discount drug card after calling 1-800 Medicare:
 1. Know your zip code;
 2. Know your drugs and dosages (having your bottles in hand can help);
 3. Know your monthly income.

- ❖ Once beneficiaries provide this information Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) operators will send a personalized report that includes a list of the lowest cost cards and the pharmacies where they are accepted with an application so they can make a decision about which card is best and apply directly to the card sponsor.
- ❖ All Medicare beneficiaries, except those who have outpatient drug coverage through Medicaid, are eligible to enroll in a Medicare-approved drug discount card program. The card sponsors may charge an annual enrollment fee of no more than \$30, though many cards have lower fees and some have no fee.
- ❖ Low-income Medicare beneficiaries may qualify for the \$1,200 credit over the 18-month life of the discount card program to help pay for the prescription drugs if their income in 2004 is no more than \$12,569 if single or no more than \$16,862 if married. There is no enrollment fee on any card for people who qualify for the credit.
- ❖ Customer service representatives at 1-800-MEDICARE can answer questions about the program, help callers compare the drug cards on price and network pharmacies, and provide additional information for low-income beneficiaries on prescription drug assistance programs sponsored by their state and by drug manufacturers. The customer service representatives will mail the personalized results of the comparison to callers.

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