**Medicare Outreach Idea of the Month**

**Annual Open Enrollment**

**August 2020**

Each Fall, the Medicare annual open enrollment period presents an important opportunity for Medicare beneficiaries and a busy time for benefit specialists. Things may look a little different during this year’s AEP with social distancing and other COVID related restrictions in place. Some agencies may be limiting the number of face-to-face appointments. And even if it is an option, many people with Medicare may prefer not to meet in-person. Yet it will remain crucial to educate consumers about this important time and find effective ways to assist those who need it.

Consider assisting clients through the mail or by phone instead of, or in addition to face-to-face appointments, in accord with your agency’s plans. You can send out the necessary forms and instructions to clients and other interested callers. A sample [Part D form with instructions](https://gwaar.org/api/cms/viewFile/id/2006139) can be found in the [Open Enrollment Toolkit](https://gwaar.org/open-enrollment-toolkit) on the GWAAR website. Feel free to revise the form to fit your agency’s needs. The results of the plan comparison and any follow-up instructions can be mailed to the consumer. Some benefit specialists have done this in past years, but for those who haven’t, this is a great way to assist many people without meeting in-person.

Also, as more Medicare beneficiaries become comfortable using computers, consider sharing this step-by-step [Guide to Using the Medicare Plan Finder](https://gwaar.org/api/cms/viewFile/id/2006137)\*. This document can be sent out to consumers in an email and uploaded to your agency website. Include a link to it from your Facebook page and be sure to include a link to the [Medicare Plan Finder](https://www.medicare.gov/plan-compare/#/?lang=en).

The article below may be used to remind consumers of the upcoming AEP and explain how they may receive assistance. Be sure to customize the article according to your agency’s plans.

*\*Guide revised 7/2020 and will be updated again and available on the GWAAR website 10/2020.*

**To view all the GWAAR Medicare Outreach and Assistance Resources, follow the link to our webpage:**

<https://gwaar.org/medicare-outreach-and-assistance-resources>

By the GWAAR Medicare Outreach Team

**Time to Review Your Medicare Plan**

***Prepare Early This Year!***

Do you have a Medicare Prescription Drug (Part D) plan? Every year Medicare Part D plans can change the list of prescription medications they will cover. That means even if you are taking the same medications, the amount you pay for your medications may change in 2021! The plans’ premiums, deductibles, and co-pays can also change each year.

What can people do about this? All Medicare beneficiaries should check their Part D coverage each year during Medicare’s annual open enrollment period which runs **October 15 through December 7th**. This is the time of year to find out if your current plan will cost you more, or less than other Part D plans in 2021. If it is no longer the best plan for your medications, this is the time to make a switch to a Part D plan that will suit you better.

Make sure you will have appropriate prescription drug coverage in the new year. You can compare plans on the official Medicare website at Medicare.gov. Medicare beneficiaries in <XYZ County> can also receive free, unbiased assistance with plan comparisons from the Elder Benefit Specialists at the **<Insert YOUR LOCAL CONTACT INFO HERE>.**

Start preparing early this year. The <Your agency name> has a form with instructions to help you get organized. Don’t let this opportunity pass you by! Go to Medicare.gov to compare plans online or for local assistance call the <YOUR CONTACT INFO HERE>**.**

Assistance is also available through the following resources:

* 1-800-MEDICARE or [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov)
* Medigap helpline 1-800-242-1060
* Disability Drug Helpline 1-800-926-4862 (if under age 60)
* Wisconsin Medigap Prescription Drug Helpline 1-855-677-2783