



spotlight on health care

Medicare Drug Benefit Gaining Millions Of Enrollees

(NAPSA)—According to a recent report from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Medicare's new prescription drug benefit now covers 25 million Americans, with an average of 250,000 new enrollees being added each week. In a promising sign of the program's growth, HHS' progress report showed that the number of beneficiaries rose more than 2.6 million in a month.

"It is important for seniors and people living with disabilities to understand their options with Medicare's new prescription drug benefit," said Senator Bob Dole, former presidential candidate, who is leading an ongoing, national tour to promote the new drug benefit to seniors. "Anyone eligible for Medicare in need of dependable drug coverage can join a Medicare-approved plan and potentially save a significant amount of money on their medications."

HHS says there are benefits to enrolling in a Medicare drug plan at the beginning of any given month. According to HHS, signing up early in the month means enrollees will likely have their prescriptions filled promptly and allows them to get the best value out of their drug coverage from the first day it goes into effect. More importantly, anyone who wants to take advantage of the benefit this year must sign up by May 15, 2006—the last day of 2006's open enrollment period.



Seniors who have Medicare's new prescription drug coverage are experiencing lower prices and are spending less on their medications than ever before. In order to maximize savings, seniors should compare the new Medicare options with their existing coverage to decide which option is best for them. Eligible seniors and people with disabilities may want to speak with family members to help them understand the new benefit.

Advocacy organizations representing more than 8 million Americans are supporting Dole's speaking tour. Anyone currently enrolled in or eligible for the new benefit can log on to Dole's Web site, www.bobdoleonmedicare.com, which is updated regularly with important information for seniors and their families. Seniors wanting more information or needing help in enrolling in the new Medicare drug benefit plan should call (800) MEDICARE or visit www.Medicare.gov.

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Note to Editors: This story is time-sensitive and should be used by May 10, 2006.