

NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services
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Human Services receives federal funding for Medicare Part D enrollment help

Bismarck, N.D. – The U.S. Administration on Aging has awarded the North Dakota Department of Human Services' Aging Services Division \$37,320 to help seniors enroll in Medicare Part D. This is the first federal funding North Dakota has received specifically for the purpose of helping people understand their choices and enroll in a Medicare prescription drug plan.

It will be used to sustain enrollment assistance efforts initiated by Human Services, which earmarked \$120,000 for Medicare Part D enrollment assistance in the 2005-2007 biennium. The department contracted with eight senior-affiliated organizations to provide enrollment help. That funding was expected to run out in March 2006.

“We saw a need and committed some of our Aging Services Division’s resources for this purpose months ago. We are very pleased that federal officials saw the importance of financially supporting this effort in North Dakota,” said Carol K. Olson, executive director of the N.D. Department of Human Services.

Under the leadership of Governor Hoeven, state organizations are cooperating and pooling resources to meet the need. The North Dakota Insurance Commissioner’s Office is North Dakota’s primary outreach and enrollment assistance resource through its Senior Health Insurance Counseling Program (SHIC). Insurance Department staff trained the enrollment specialists that have contracts with Human Services.

Enrollment assistance often requires individual counseling, which can take 30 minutes to an hour per person. At the end of January, about 8,000 North Dakotans had enrolled on their own or with assistance. Department of Human Services efforts generated 2,833 of those enrollments.

Enrollment rates in North Dakota are improving. Yesterday, federal officials reported that voluntary enrollments in the state have grown to 16,853. Seniors and others who qualify for the Medicare prescription drug program can receive help understanding their options by calling SHIC at 1-888-575-6611 or Medicare at 1-800-633-4227.

Enrollment assistance is also available through these entities under contracts with the Human Services department: Burleigh County Senior Adults, 701-255-4648; Fargo Senior Services, 701-293-1440; Greater Grand Forks Senior Citizens, 701-772-7245; Minot Commission on Aging, 701-852-0561; Rolette County Senior Meals & Services, 701-477-6421; South Central Adult Services (Valley City), 701-845-4300; Stark County Council on Aging Elder Care (Dickinson), 701-456-1818; and Williston Region I Senior Services, 701-577-6751.

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