

SHIIP program offers local help with open Medicare enrollment options

Written by Wauneta Breeze
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Medicare's Open Enrollment season is nearly upon us. From Oct. 15–Dec. 7, those with Medicare can evaluate the new benefits Medicare has to offer, and if they choose, make changes to their prescription or health coverage.

Nebraska Senior Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP) counselors are available to assist those with Medicare with comparing their options for 2013.

Nancy Frecks, UNL Extension SW 4 Counties Extension Educator is a Nebraska SHIIP volunteer and is available locally to review plans. Nancy will be taking appointments in Benkelman, Hayes Center, Imperial, Trenton, and Grant.

To make an appointment call the UNL Extension office in those communities.

Phone numbers for the offices and dates that she will be in each community are as follows:

Benkelman (308 423 2021) Oct. 23, 30, Nov. 5, 20, and Dec. 4.

Hayes Center (308 286 3312) Oct. 19, Nov. 2, 9, 16, 30, and Dec. 7.

Imperial (308 882 4731) Oct. 22, 29, Nov. 1, 8, 13, 15, 27, 29, Dec. 5, and 6.

Trenton (308 334 5666) Oct. 15, 25, 31, Nov. 6, 19, 26, Dec. 3.

Grant (308 352 4340) Oct. 24, Nov. 14 and 28

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There has never been a better time to find out about Medicare coverage. Whether you have Original Medicare or a Medicare Advantage plan, there are several new benefits, including lower prescription costs. People who take advantage of open enrollment may be able to save money and get improved coverage.

“Your health needs change from year to year. And, your prescription or health plan may change the benefits and costs each year, too. That’s why it’s important to evaluate your Medicare choices every year,” said Alicia Jones, Director of the Nebraska program.

“It’s worth the time to compare options, but you don’t have to do it alone. Medicare and Nebraska SHIIP provide free, unbiased counseling,” said Jones who offered three ways for people to get help:

- Get one-on-one help from the Nebraska Senior Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP). Call the SHIIP toll-free hotline at 800-234-7119 or one of the numbers above to make an appointment.
- Visit <http://www.medicare.gov/find-a-plan> to compare your current coverage with all of the available options 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/7 days a week to find out more about your coverage options. TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048.