



MAKING MEDICARE MAKE SENSE

Answers To Some of The Most Commonly Asked Medicare Questions

Q: Is There a Free Local Resource to get Help with Medicare Questions?

A: Yes. Every state and territory in the United States has a State Health Insurance Assistance Program known as the SHIP that gets some or most of its funding from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), the federal agency responsible for administering the Medicare program. There are 54 SHIPs nationwide.

The SHIP program is funded to help Medicare beneficiaries in each state with local, personalized assistance on a wide variety of Medicare and health insurance topics.

Recently, all of the SHIP programs nationwide received their grant funding from CMS for 2009. This new funding will help ensure that the SHIP programs continue to work with their local governments, community-based organizations and other partners in each state to help meet the needs of our Medicare beneficiaries.

CMS expects the SHIPs to use the 2009 funding to conduct targeted community-based outreach to people with Medicare who may be unable to access other sources of information. SHIPs will also provide outreach and assistance to current and newly eligible Medicare beneficiaries and their caregivers, with a special emphasis on reaching people who will most likely be eligible for Medicare's low-income subsidy if they enroll in Medicare prescription drug coverage.

The SHIP staff in each state recruit and train volunteers on the Medicare program so that Medicare beneficiaries in almost every part of a state have access to local help via phone or in person. If you are interested in being a SHIP volunteer, please contact the appropriate SHIP program listed below.

CMS will continue to support the quality of services provided by SHIPs through training, technical assistance, a SHIP Resource Center, and the online tools at www.medicare.gov to assist people with Medicare.

The Kansas City Regional Office for CMS oversees the SHIPs in Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska.

Below is the contact information for each of these SHIPs:

- IOWA** - The Senior Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP),
1-800-351-4664.
- KANSAS** - The Senior Health Insurance Counseling for Kansas (SHICK) program,
1-800-860-5260.
- MISSOURI** - The Community Leaders Assisting the Insured of Missouri (CLAIM) program,
1-800-390-3330.
- NEBRASKA** - The Nebraska Senior Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP),
1-800-234-7119.

To find the local SHIP in your state, contact 1-800-Medicare which is 1-800-633-4227.