



Date: April 21, 2015

DQA Numbered Memo 15-005

To: [Nursing Homes](#)

From: Juan Flores, Director  
Bureau of Nursing Home Resident Care

Via: Otis Woods, Administrator

## Medicare Part D in Nursing Homes

The purpose of this memo is to inform nursing homes regulated by the Division of Quality Assurance (DQA) about their role in assisting residents with Medicare Part D enrollment.

Medicare Part D has open enrollments each fall for seniors but residents in nursing homes can change Medicare Part D plans more frequently. Sometimes residents may need to change plans due to changing pharmacy needs like packaging and specific medication changes that occur upon admission to a nursing home.

As with many other changes that occur for seniors when being admitted to a nursing home, social workers' assistance to residents contemplating Medicare Part D enrollment and coverage issues can be crucial. While nursing homes are prohibited from steering residents to specific plans, nursing home social workers can and should assist residents in obtaining information about the plans that are available to them, using the online Medicare Plan Finder tool at [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov). This assistance by the nursing home and social workers will ensure that a resident's choices are honored. Social Services staff must provide, if necessary, referrals to appropriate agencies in cases of financial, psychiatric, rehabilitative or social problems which the facility cannot serve. See, Wis. Admin. Code § DHS 132.68 (5)(a).

### Resources for Social Workers

DQA highly encourages nursing home social workers to seek training and support that will equip them to better assist residents. A variety of resources are available.

#### *Federal Resources*

- **www.Medicare.gov or 1-800-MEDICARE:** Medicare information is available to the public at the Medicare website, as well as a toll-free helpline. The Medicare website features a plan finder tool that can provide detailed information about plan options, based on a person's Medicare ID, zip code, prescription medications, and preferred pharmacy. Customer service representatives at the Medicare helpline can also assist individuals in researching plan options and enrollment information.

- **National Medicare Training Program:** The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) offers periodic webinars, as well as written materials. To obtain materials and subscribe to receive email notices about upcoming training opportunities, visit [www.cms.gov/Outreach-and-Education/Training/CMSNationalTrainingProgram](http://www.cms.gov/Outreach-and-Education/Training/CMSNationalTrainingProgram).

### *State-Specific Resources*

- **Wisconsin's Medigap Part D and Prescription Drug Helpline 1-855-677-2783:** This toll-free helpline sponsored by the Board on Aging and Long-Term Care is staffed by licensed insurance counselors and specializes in providing information related to Medicare Part D and other prescription drug coverage options for Wisconsin seniors. Nursing home social workers are welcome to contact the helpline for help in gathering information to assist residents.
- **Medicare Updates for Wisconsin Professionals:** The State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) sponsors an annual webinar for Wisconsin professionals each fall in preparation for the Medicare Open Enrollment Period. This training covers general Medicare issues, as well as Wisconsin-specific issues and options. For more information, contact Wisconsin's Medigap Part D and Prescription Drug Helpline at 1-855-677-2783.
- **Benefit Specialists:** Benefit specialists located at local Aging Units and Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs) are limited in their ability to assist individuals residing in an institutional setting. Nursing home staff may refer a resident or his/her legally authorized representative to a benefit specialist for help with complex issues such as the denial of an application for Medicaid or allegations of an overpayment. Residents with routine benefit questions about Medicare Part D plan options or the standard Medicaid application should not be referred to a benefit specialist.

### **Questions**

If you have questions about this information, please contact the DQA Pharmacist Consultant at (608) 266-5388 or [DHSWebmailDQA@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DHSWebmailDQA@wisconsin.gov).