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FREE MEDICARE COUNSELING AVAILABLE TO MEDICARE BENEFICIARIES AND THEIR CAREGIVERS

Medicare's Open Enrollment begins October 15, 2015

MONTGOMERY – The Medicare Annual Enrollment Period, also known as Open-Enrollment, will begin Thursday, October 15th and end December 7th. This is the time when Medicare beneficiaries can make changes to their health insurance coverage. The Alabama Department of Senior Services administers the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) locally through the 13 Area Agencies on Aging. The SHIP Program provides free assistance to Medicare beneficiaries on all of their health coverage issues and coordination of benefits. Alabama has over 500 local certified Medicare counselors who will be available across the state to provide FREE plan comparisons, counseling and assistance, and help Medicare beneficiaries navigate their coverage options.

Alabama SHIP has scheduled over 212 free community enrollment events. People interested in attending one of these events should plan to come prepared with a list of their medications and proof of income if they wish to be screened for other benefits and programs they may be eligible to receive.

"We all understand the importance of having an annual physical check-up each year," said Neal Morrison, Commissioner of the Department of Senior Services. "Medicare beneficiaries should also have a 'health coverage check-up' each year, since there may be changes to their current plan beginning in 2016. Medications that have been covered this year by a health plan may no longer be covered under that plan. This makes it very important for people to contact their local SHIP program and take advantage of the free counseling services available in their community."

Medicare beneficiaries can contact their local SHIP Program by calling 1-800-AGE-LINE or 1-800-243-5463.

A list of free enrollment counseling events can be located at the Alabama Department of Senior Services website at www.AlabamaAgeline.gov.

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