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October 24, 2005

To: Supervisor Gloria Molina, Chair
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: David E. Janssen
Chief Administrative Officer

PRESCRIPTION DRUG PLAN OUTREACH

On September 6, 2005, your Board instructed the Chief Administrative Office (CAO), with the assistance of the Departments of Health Services and Community and Senior Services, and in consultation with 2-1-1, to provide a status report to the Board on progress made in developing an outreach program to seniors relative to the Medicare prescription drug plan. This report provides an update of efforts to (1) ensure 2-1-1 LA County has appropriate information available to assist seniors with the prescription drug plan, and (2) efforts underway by the Departments of Community and Senior Services and Health Services in further enhancing outreach to the County's senior citizens on the Medicare prescription drug plan.

Utilization of 2-1-1 LA County

Medicare benficiaries in Los Angeles County will have several choices for prescription drug coverage. Plans have been designed to suit individual needs. Plans range from "stand-alone" drug coverage to plans that provide coverage through the individual's Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) or Preferred Provider Organization (PPO) plan. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) have developed fact sheets, prescription drug plan cost estimators, and other resources for use with the prescription drug plan. CMS has published a *Medicare & You 2006* handbook. The handbook is scheduled to be mailed to every Medicare household in October 2005.

The resources developed by CMS have been made available to 2-1-1 LA County. 2-1-1 LA County is in the process of performing additional research and integrating the relevant information into their resource database. Training of 2-1-1 staff is underway and is targeted for completion shortly. Basic information and referrals can be provided to

Medicare beneficiaries or individuals involved in the care of a Medicare beneficiary. 2-1-1 LA County will provide referral alternatives to individuals based on the specific needs and capabiltiies of the caller. CMS has expanded the capabilities of their 1-800-MEDICARE information line and the www.medicare.gov web site to include comprehensive information on the Medicare part D benefit plan.

2-1-1 LA County will continue to work with my office and the departments of Community and Senior Services and Health Services to ensure the most relevant and up-to-date information is provided to users of the 2-1-1 system.

Planned Outreach – Community and Senior Services (CSS)

The Medicare Part D - the drug discount program scheduled to begin in January 2006 presents challenges and opportunities for CSS. The challenges include dissemination of information and outreach to Medicare eligible beneficiaries who will benefit from this program.

CSS has a number of broad strategies to enhance outreach to seniors about the prescription drug plan which include the following:

- Utilize CSS service centers and senior centers to disseminate information;
- Establish contact with other cities in the County to utilize their senior centers, recreation centers or other community centers to disseminate information;
- Explore the possibility of PSAs (Public Service Announcements) in the different media outlets and in different languages; and
- Utilize the broad contractor service network to outreach to the senior population and program clients/participants with special attention to home-bound or shut-in seniors and limited-English or non-English speaking seniors.

In addition, the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) is developing a mobilization plan by November 4, 2005 to prepare for the overall implementation of Medicare Part D in three areas: outreach, education/information, and enrollment. The AAA is collaborating with the City of Los Angeles AAA in this effort. The plan will designate a County AAA point person for communication with the County's and community partners. Liaisons will be designated in each area of implementation.

In the upcoming weeks, CSS will be meeting with relevant stakeholders and consulting with the Los Angeles Commission on Aging on education, outreach and enrollment issues and the prescription drug program. Subsequent to that, CSS will report back with more specific details regarding these strategies.

Health Services

DHS believes that the inclusion of a pharmacy benefit will enhance health care delivery for Medicare beneficiaries. Medicare Part D is administered by a variety of Prescription Drug Plan (PDP) companies, each of which can select their own formulary within CMS guidelines. There are provisions of Medicare Part D that may have unanticipated adverse consequences on the "dual-eligible" (i.e., Medicare + Medi-Cal beneficiaries). For the dual-eligibles, their pharmacy benefit, which was traditionally covered by the Medi-Cal program with a consistent statewide drug formulary, will now be provided by one of the Medicare PDP providers. For example, dual-eligible persons living with HIV and AIDS will be required to access drug coverage under Medicare part D and pay out-of-pocket for their Medi-Cal share of cost. Although the inclusion of standard HIV/AIDS antiviral medications in PDP formularies is required, some medications frequently prescribed to address problems related to HIV/AIDS are not a part of the mandatory formulary.

DHS, both Public and Personal Health, are developing policies and procedures to ensure that patients are referred to their Medicare PDP, or to the Medicare information line, 1-800-MEDICARE to minimize interruption in care. Unlike the Medicare fee-for-service population, dual-eligibles will automatically be covered by Medicare Part D, but will still need to select a PDP, or Medicare will take the action of auto-enrolling the dual-eligible patient into a pre-selected PDP.

DHS will be providing education to its providers, both pharmacists and physicians, and its patients on the benefits of Medicare Part D.

If you have any questions, please let me know, or your staff may contact Dorothea Park of my staff at (213) 974-4283.

DEJ:MKZ
DP:ib

c: Director of Community and Senior Services
Director and Chief Medical Officer of Health Services
2-1-1 LA County