

PRESS RELEASE
County offers Medicare Part D Workshops

What: County workshops on new Medicare rules

Where: Antioch, Brentwood & Pittsburg

When: Ongoing through November

Why: Deadline to enroll is approaching

Contact:

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About Medicare Prescription Plan: Call 1-800-633-4227

Antioch Senior Center: 925-778-1158

Pittsburg Senior Center: 925-439-4001

Beginning on the first day of 2006, a new federal program will provide prescription drug coverage under Medicare. In order to explain the new plan, called Medicare Part D, Contra Costa County's Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program (HICAP) will be holding a series of free workshops throughout East County in the coming weeks to explain the benefits of the new program and how to enroll.

"The new healthcare options can be confusing to many of the elderly," said Supervisor Federal Glover. "But it is important they understand how the new Medicare Part D will affect Medicare, retiree benefits, Medicare HMO, Medi-Cal or Medi-Gap health coverages." Glover is the county supervisor representing District 5, which covers the cities of Oakley, Antioch and Pittsburg and includes the unincorporated communities of Bay Point and Bethel Island.

Effective Jan. 1, 2006, Medi-Cal cards will no longer cover prescription drug costs and seniors will have to enroll in a new plan. Seniors will have to choose among a variety of options from private health plans to Medicare Part D. Each plan will cover a different list of prescriptions drugs. Medicare recipients will begin choosing their program beginning Nov. 15 and have until May 15, 2006. People can choose not to sign up for a plan, but may have to pay the penalties if they sign up after May 15.

"It would help if people who attend the workshops have a list of their prescribed drugs so that counselors can help choose the correct health plan for their prescriptions," said Glover.

The workshops being held in East County are at:

--**Antioch:** Oct. 19, Wednesday, 2 p.m. at the Antioch Hillcrest Terrace, 3420 Deer Valley Road; Nov. 18, Friday, 10:30 a.m. at the Antioch Senior Center, 415 West 2nd St.

--**Brentwood:** Nov. 3, Thursday, 10:30 a.m. at the Brentwood Medical Center, 2400 Balfour Road. Call 925-674-2586 for reservations.

--**Pittsburg:** Nov. 14, Monday, 10:30 a.m. at the Pittsburg Senior Center, 300 Presidio Lane.

HICAP services are free of charge to all Medicare beneficiaries and anyone 60 or older. An individual counseling appointment can be scheduled by calling (800) 510-2020.