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Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

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State Medicare Information Office's hard work earns extra funding

Alaska's Medicare counseling program wins performance award to do additional outreach

(Anchorage, AK) — The federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) on Sept. 30 gave Alaska's Medicare Information Office a \$32,000 supplemental grant to support its mission of counseling Alaskans eligible for Medicare; \$18,850 of that is a performance-based award.

Alaska's Medicare Information Office houses the federal CMS State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP), which helps Medicare beneficiaries get the most out of their Medicare. CMS provides technical assistance and funding for the SHIPs nationwide, and gives performance awards to SHIPs that have met certain targets in serving Medicare beneficiaries. Medicare is health insurance for Americans 65 and older or with certain disabilities.

Alaska's office was ranked sixth in the nation, based on measures such as the number of Medicare beneficiaries counseled and number of active volunteer counselors. The office is part of the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Senior and Disabilities Services Division.

The Medicare Information Office receives hundreds of inquiries each week from Alaskans about how and when to enroll in the different aspects of Medicare coverage, how Medicare works with other insurance such as military benefits, how to prevent Medicare fraud, and more. Staff members present about 10 seminars each month to various business and community groups. They also reach out to non-English speaking populations and connect limited-income Alaskans with assistance programs such as the Social Security Administration's "Extra Help" subsidy for Medicare Part D prescription drug plan premiums.

"Your Medicare Information Office serves an important role in providing information and support to Alaskans with Medicare, and to their families and caregivers," said CMS Acting Administrator Charlene Frizzera. "This new funding will help to ensure that Alaska's Medicare Information Office continues to work effectively with local governments, community-based organizations and other partners to help meet the needs of people with Medicare."

Medicare Information Office is also Alaska's office for SMP, a federal program to cut Medicare fraud, waste and abuse. The office can be reached at 269-3680 in Anchorage or toll-free statewide at 1-800-478-6065.

For more information on Medicare, go to Medicare.alaska.gov or www.medicare.gov.

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