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### **Deadline nears to sign up for Medicare prescription plans**

#### ***Fewer plans in 2011; Medicare Information Office busy helping Alaskans choose best option***

(Anchorage, AK) — Alaska's Medicare Information Office reminds Alaskans who have or need a Medicare prescription drug plan that Dec. 31 is the deadline to enroll if they have not done so already. People are encouraged to sign up as soon as possible to avoid delays at the pharmacy in January.

Medicare Information Office staff and volunteers around the state are busy helping Alaskans compare the plans available. For help, call 269-3680 in Anchorage or 1-800-478-6065 toll-free statewide.

Not all current plans will exist next year because insurance companies are offering fewer plans in Alaska next year — 26, down from 41 — so Alaskans with plans are strongly encouraged to review new options. News on plan discontinuations is in the Medicare Part D Annual Notice of Change letters that were mailed by plan companies in October. People who get Medicaid or the Social Security Administration's Extra Help program received blue or beige letters with instructions, too.

Other reasons to look at the 2011 plans:

- A person's medication needs may have changed in the past year and may be better met by a different plan.
- Some Alaska plans have stopped covering certain drugs, changed their deductibles or raised premiums.
- New federal law lowers the cost of prescriptions in the "doughnut hole," a gap in Part D coverage.

Medicare recipients are charged permanent late-enrollment fees if they do not sign up the first time they are eligible. The exception is if they already have coverage — under Medicaid or a health care insurance plan such as the military's TriCare or most employer-funded retiree health plans.

The Medicare Information Office is part of the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Senior and Disabilities Services. For more information, visit [medicare.alaska.gov](http://medicare.alaska.gov).

Medicare is a federal health insurance program for Americans 65 and older or with certain disabilities. For national Medicare information, call 1-800-Medicare (1-800-633-4227), or go to [medicare.gov](http://medicare.gov).

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