



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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A Last-minute Reminder to Seniors to Sign Up for Illinois Cares Rx by the December Deadline

To find out more about Illinois Cares Rx, visit www.illinoisbenefits.org or call the Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966

SPRINGFIELD - As we approach the end of the 2008 calendar year, Illinois Department on Aging Director Charles D. Johnson urges Illinois seniors who have not applied for the Illinois Cares Rx to apply online before midnight on Thursday, December 18 to avoid a break in coverage on January 1, 2009. Illinois Cares Rx provides wrap-around prescription drug coverage to fill in the gaps created by Medicare Part D for seniors and people with disabilities when their out-of-pocket costs for prescription drugs increase under Medicare Part D. It is also a safety net for people who do not have Medicare. Applications are available online at www.illinoisbenefits.org for seniors, who may also ask questions by calling the Senior HelpLine at **1-800-252-8966** (TTY 888-206-1327.)

“We want to make sure that no senior has to choose between buying prescription drugs and meeting their basic living needs,” said Director Johnson. “I can’t stress how important it is that seniors and people with disabilities log on now to apply for this prescription drug benefit and other benefits to avoid any break in coverage.”

Earlier this year, the Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) mailed yellow postcards to individuals, in the program, who have not yet reapplied this year, reminding them to file their applications as soon as possible to receive their benefits and ensure that they do not experience a break in pharmaceutical coverage.

Individuals eligible for the Illinois Cares Rx program may also be eligible for additional benefits from the State’s Circuit Breaker program. The Circuit Breaker program provides a property tax relief grant for individuals who pay property tax on their residence or rent or nursing home charges on a residence that is subject to property tax. In addition, the program provides an annual \$54.00 discount on the license plate fee for one vehicle. These benefits, including Illinois Cares Rx, can be accessed by applying on one application.

In 2006, the Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) made Illinois Cares Rx applications available online to make it easier and quicker to apply for benefits and to accommodate the increasing number of older persons accessing the World Wide Web. Several studies show that seniors are the fastest growing population of Internet users. So far, this year 228,326 Illinois Cares Rx Internet applications have been received, compared to 190,976 received last year. These numbers show a drastic increase compared to the 75,288 applications filed online in all of 2006 (for the 2005 claim year.)

Before logging on to the Internet, Director Johnson suggests individuals should have the following information available: Social Security number(s), amount of property taxes or rent paid in 2007, and a copy of 2007 federal tax returns or a list of all income received in 2007. And for those seniors and disabled persons who don’t own a computer, ask to use a family member’s, visit a public library, community center, Area Agency on Aging or senior center.

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Those eligible for Illinois Cares Rx fall into one of the following groups whether or not they have Medicare:

1. Illinois Cares Rx Plus

- **Who can enroll?** If you are 65 years of age or older, a citizen or qualified non-citizen and have an annual income of no more than \$23,903; for a household of two with an annual income limit of \$32,177.
- **What's covered?** Almost all prescription drugs are covered.

2. Illinois Cares Rx Basic

- **Who can enroll?** Seniors or persons with disabilities with income less than \$25,532 for a single person, \$33,877 for a household of two, and \$42,220 for a household of three or more people.
- **What's covered?** Prescription drugs for the treatment of Alzheimer's disease, arthritis, cancer, diabetes, glaucoma, cardiovascular disease, lung disease and smoking-related illnesses, osteoporosis, Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, and HIV/AIDS (if you have Medicare).

For more information, visit www.illinoisbenefits.org on the Web; or for assistance, please call the Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966 (888-206-1327 TTY.)

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