



Pat Quinn, Governor
Charles D. Johnson, Director

421 East Capitol Avenue, #100, Springfield, Illinois 62701-1789
217-785-3356, Fax: 217-785-4477 • www.state.il.us/aging

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 1, 2009

CONTACTS:

Kimberly Parker, 312-814-1577
Anjali Julka (Insurance/SHIP), 312-814-0093
Annie Thompson (HFS), 217-558-1543

Seniors Reminded to Apply NOW Online for Illinois Cares Rx to Avoid a Break in Coverage

*For more information on Illinois Cares Rx,
call the Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966 or visit www.cbrx.il.gov*

SPRINGFIELD — Illinois Department on Aging Director Charles D. Johnson is reminding Illinois seniors to sign up now for Illinois Cares Rx to avoid a break in coverage and to ensure coverage begins on January 1. Seniors and persons with disabilities are encouraged to apply online because it is the fastest way to get approved. Illinois Cares Rx is the state's prescription drug assistance program that provides wrap-around prescription drug coverage to fill in the gaps created by Medicare Part D. Processing for the online application takes about four weeks and those who apply now would avoid a break in coverage and ensure coverage begins on January 1.

"If you haven't applied for the Illinois Cares Rx drug coverage program this year because your income was over the limit, or you didn't think you were eligible, I encourage you to apply," said Director Johnson. "Seniors who have access to the Internet may file for Illinois Cares Rx online so that you can get your benefits faster. And if you don't own a computer, I recommend either reaching out to family members who do own computers, visit your local Area Agency on Aging or senior centers, or contact a SHIP volunteer in your community. And remember, if you have any questions, you can always call the Illinois Department on Aging's Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966."

To assist those who may need extra help to apply, the Illinois Department of Insurance's Senior Health Insurance Program (SHIP) is offering free, one-on-one counseling services and in communities across the state to assist Medicare-eligible individuals during the open enrollment period. For a list of SHIP volunteers, visit the SHIP Web site (<http://insurance.illinois.gov/ship/>) or call SHIP toll-free at 1-800-548-9034.

"The cost of prescription drugs has escalated to the point of being unaffordable for many of the people who rely on them most, especially seniors and people with disabilities," said Healthcare and Family Services Director Barry S. Maram. "No one should have to go without the medications that keep them healthy, which is why I strongly encourage seniors and people with disabilities to see whether they qualify for prescription drug assistance through Illinois Cares Rx."

In addition to reminding seniors and people with disabilities to reapply now to avoid a break in coverage, the state is also noting changes that will benefit more enrollees.

(Continued on next page.)

A new law will make it easier for some to get into the program. Last month, Governor Pat Quinn signed House Bill 366 into law to expand the Circuit Breaker program, which includes the Illinois Cares Rx program, property tax relief grant and a license plate discount. The new law raises the income eligibility. By allowing higher incomes, more seniors and persons with disabilities will be eligible to receive the state's prescription drug assistance. The new limits effective on January 1, 2010 will be:

- \$27,610 (currently \$22,218) – for a household size of one
- \$36,635 (currently \$29,480) – for a household size of two
- \$45,657 (currently \$36,740) – for a household size of three or more

More good news is that the medications available to Illinois Cares Rx enrollees also have been expanded.

In *2008 235,236 applied online, compared to *2007 when 158,888 applied online and 75,288 in *2006, the first year the Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) had made the Illinois Cares Rx application available online. **Each year listed accounts for the previous claim year.*

Before logging on to the Internet, individuals should have the following information available: Social Security number(s), amount of property taxes paid in 2008, amount of rent paid in 2008, and a copy of 2008 federal tax returns.

Seniors with questions about Illinois Cares Rx may log on to www.cbrx.il.gov or call the Illinois Department on Aging's Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966.

#