

PRESS RELEASE

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Department on Aging and State's Senior Health Insurance Program (SHIP) commemorate Medicare 50th Anniversary

SHIP is a free statewide health insurance counseling service for Medicare beneficiaries and their caregivers

SPRINGFIELD – July 23, 2015. In commemoration of Medicare's 50th anniversary (July 30th), the Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) would like to encourage Illinois seniors and people with disabilities to learn about services provided by the Senior Health Insurance Program (SHIP). This year, marks the 50th anniversary of the enactment of Amendments to the Social Security Act that established the Medicare program.

"The Department on Aging supports SHIP's role in assisting older adults and individuals with disabilities make informed decisions," said Acting Director Jennifer Reif. "There are more than 250 existing local SHIP offices statewide with 1,000 dedicated counselors who are readily available to assist and educate people about Medicare and available insurance options."

SHIP is a year round program, not affiliated with any insurance company, and counselors do not sell or solicit any type of insurance. SHIP counselors in the field make sure seniors and people with disabilities on Medicare are aware of options that can save them money. Counselors educate and answer questions about Medicare, Medicare Supplement, and long term care insurance. Also, SHIP counselors assist beneficiaries with their Part D choices during Medicare's annual open enrollment from October 15 through December 7 each year.

"The hard work of our SHIP counselors allows the people with Medicare and their caregivers, piece of mind when faced with making the choice on how to receive their Medicare benefits. Medicare has offered so much over the past 50 years, and SHIP will work hand in hand with Medicare throughout the next 50 years to ensure that our citizens are getting the most care from their Medicare benefits," said Sandy Leith, SHIP Director

The State's SHIP program serves 82,000 Illinois seniors and people with disabilities annually. You can contact SHIP at 800-252-8966. More information about SHIP is available at:

<https://www.illinois.gov/aging/ship/Pages/default.aspx>

Next week, to commemorate Medicare's 50th anniversary, regional Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) will host public events in addition to a national event in Washington, D.C. In Chicago, representatives for IDoA and SHIP will participate in a Medicare 50th Anniversary regional roundtable discussion. Beneficiaries, providers, and health experts will reflect on Medicare over the years as well as explore ways to strengthen and improve health care programs.

About the Illinois Department on Aging

The Department's mission is to serve and advocate for older Illinoisans and their caregivers by administering quality and culturally appropriate programs that promote partnerships and encourage independence, dignity and quality of life. For more information, call the Senior HelpLine at 800-252-8966 (or TTY for the hearing impaired at 888-206-1327), or log on to the website at www.illinois.gov/aging

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