

PRESS RELEASE

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State's Senior Health Insurance Program Moves to the Department on Aging

*SHIP Provides Seniors & People with Disabilities Help with Insurance Options;
Call (800) 548-9034 or visit the website at <http://www.state.il.us/aging/>*

SPRINGFIELD - April 1, 2013. Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) Director John K. Holton, Ph.D., today announced the Senior Health Insurance Program (SHIP) is now administered by the department. SHIP is a free statewide health insurance counseling service for Medicare beneficiaries and their caregivers. SHIP was previously under the Department of Insurance, but the Governor signed Executive Order 13-1 which transfers SHIP to Aging effective April 1.

“The Department on Aging is well positioned to support the expanding role of SHIP in assisting older adults and individuals with disabilities make informed health care decisions. SHIP counseling is a natural extension of many of our existing services so it makes sense for the program to be under the department,” said Director Holton.

“There are more than 190 existing local SHIP offices statewide with dedicated counselors who work hard to 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, long term care insurance, Medicare HMOs, private fee-for-service and other health insurance; Organize/assist filing Medicare and Medicare Supplement claims; and Analyze Medicare Supplement and long term care policies.

“We are excited for SHIP to become a part of the Illinois Department on Aging,” said Elizabeth Diaz-Castillo, SHIP Director. “With the transition we expect to increase our education and outreach efforts to assist more Medicare beneficiaries understand and utilize their benefits.”

The state's SHIP program has been recognized for exemplary performance and outreach strategies. Last year, Illinois ranked number one nationwide for most improved overall SHIP performance and ranked seventh among the 54 SHIPs nationwide. The SHIP phone number is (800) 548-9034. A list of SHIP volunteers is available at <http://www.state.il.us/aging/SHIP/SiteSponsorListByCountyAll.pdf>

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.state.il.us/aging.