



John K. Holton, Ph.D., Director

One Natural Resources Way, Suite 100, Springfield, Illinois 62702-1271  
Phone: 217-785-3356, Fax: 217-785-4477, Web: [www.state.il.us/aging](http://www.state.il.us/aging)

## PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Tuesday, October 15, 2013

CONTACT:

Kimberly Parker (312) 814-1577  
[Kimberly.Parker@illinois.gov](mailto:Kimberly.Parker@illinois.gov)

### **Medicare Annual Open Enrollment Period Starts October 15; Department on Aging Offers Free Counseling**

*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 - October 15, 2013.** Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) Director John K. Holton, Ph.D., today announced free counseling assistance is available to help educate Medicare-eligible individuals and their caregivers regarding their Medicare insurance options. Medicare Open Enrollment starts today, October 15, and runs through December 7. The department's Senior Health Insurance Program, (SHIP), provides free counseling for Medicare beneficiaries and their caregivers.

"Annual open enrollment is time to review your Medicare Part D, Medicare Advantage plan or check current coverage to make sure your benefits are working for you. I encourage people to use this time to re-read any letters you've received from the U-S Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, review your current plan, and note of any changes in costs and benefits that will take effect next year. Medicare coverage and determining which of the different options to select can be overwhelming, but a SHIP counselor can help," said Director Holton.

SHIP counselors can explain the drug, health, and supplemental plans that are available to help seniors and people with disabilities to help them make the best choices. The SHIP hotline, 800-548-9034, is open 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., weekdays. For SHIP sites, go to <http://www.state.il.us/aging/SHIP/SiteSponsorListByCountyAll.pdf>.

SHIP is a year round program, not affiliated with any insurance company, and counselors do not sell or solicit any type of insurance. Counselors educate and answer questions about Medicare A, B, D and Medicare Advantage plans, Medicare Supplement policies, Extra Help for Part D, long term care insurance, and employer/retiree health plans. Counselors are adept at filing Medicare appeals and will help make sense of the paperwork associated with Medicare such as explanation of benefits notices and bills from medical providers. SHIP counseling services allow for peace-of- mind, knowing that you are getting the most from your health insurance benefits.

It is important to clarify Medicare Open Enrollment (October 15 to December 7) is not the same as the open enrollment that started October 1<sup>st</sup> for uninsured people to sign up for coverage on health insurance exchanges or marketplace. Enrollment to purchase health coverage on the new marketplace, which in Illinois is called *Get Covered Illinois*, runs until March 2014. If you have health coverage through Medicare, the Marketplace will not have any effect on your Medicare coverage. To compare 2014 drug and health plans and find out more about Medicare, including preventive services now covered, log on the federal website at [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov).

#### **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](http://www.state.il.us/aging).