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PRESS RELEASE

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Department on Aging to Assist Older Adults During Medicare Open Enrollment Period

Free Help Available from Certified Health Insurance Counselors

SPRINGFIELD, III. – With the Medicare open enrollment period set to begin Oct. 15, older adults looking to change their existing Medicare plan can receive free, personalized assistance through the Illinois Department on Aging’s (IDoA) Senior Health Insurance Program (SHIP).

“It can be overwhelming and confusing to try to figure out which Medicare plan best meets your needs, and unfortunately making the wrong choice can lead to high costs,” said Paula Basta, Director of the IDoA. “Our SHIP counselors are working both in-person and virtually to help older adults make the most of their Medicare benefits, potentially saving them hundreds of dollars a year. I encourage anyone with questions about Medicare to make an appointment with a certified counselor for peace of mind that your insurance needs are in the hands of a trained expert who has your best interest at heart.”

During open enrollment, which runs from Oct. 15 through Dec. 7, people who are already enrolled in Medicare have the opportunity to review their current coverage and switch to a different plan for the following year. To make this process easier for Medicare beneficiaries and their caregivers, Illinois’ SHIP program offers statewide health insurance counseling services through a network of 325 sites and 1,100 trained and certified counselors. SHIP counselors can answer questions about Medicare, Medicare Supplement, long-term care insurance, Medicare HMO’s, private fee-for-service and other health insurances. All services are free, and SHIP counselors do not sell or solicit any type of insurance.

Aside from open enrollment assistance, SHIP counselors can also help soon-to-be eligible individuals with Medicare sign-up questions. To find a SHIP counselor near you, call 1-800-252-8966 or visit <https://www2.illinois.gov/aging/ship/Pages/default.aspx>. You can also compare details of Medicare plans at <https://www.medicare.gov/plan-compare/#/?lang=en&year=2021>.

For more information about the IDoA’s programs and services for older adults and persons with disabilities, contact the Senior HelpLine toll-free at 1-800-252-8966, Monday through Friday between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m.

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The Illinois Department on Aging does not discriminate in admission to programs or treatment of employment in programs or activities in compliance with appropriate State and Federal statutes. If you feel you have been discriminated against, call the Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966; 1-888-206-1327 (TTY)