



For Immediate Release

Contact:
Ronda Kramer
530-898-6067
rjkramer@csuchico.edu

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PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT Medicare Rights & Protections & COVID

PASSAGES Health Insurance Counseling & Advocacy Program (HICAP) wants to inform people with Medicare, and those who care for them, that the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), the agency that administers Medicare, has instituted several protections for Medicare beneficiaries during this Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The most important protections include: no cost-sharing for COVID-19 testing and the associated provider visit; COVID related hospitalizations and approved stays at a skilled nursing facility (SNF) will be covered by Medicare, but the appropriate cost-sharing will apply; the 3-day inpatient hospital stay requirement for a Part A SNF covered stay is waived; Home Health coverage limitations have been relaxed, if services in other settings make the patient more susceptible to contracting COVID; and an expansion of Telehealth services provided by various medical and mental health professionals. HICAP also wants to hear from anyone who would like to appeal a notice of cessation of services provided by a hospital, SNF or Home Health agency.

Medicare's Part D prescription plans can, at the request of the beneficiary, ask for a 90-day supply of their medication as long as there are no safety restrictions, and can also obtain their medications at non-network pharmacies when enrollees cannot reasonably be expected to use in-network pharmacies.

In addition, individuals living in Butte and Tehama counties who enrolled in the new Medicare Advantage plan through Anthem Blue Cross and are having problems accessing care or having to pay more than they expected, can call HICAP to see if they are eligible to return back to Original Medicare prior to the next Open Enrollment.

HICAP can arrange a telephonic counseling session with a State registered Medicare counselor by calling 1-800-434-0222 Monday-Friday 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM and leave a detailed message. Calls will be returned within 2 business days. As an alternative, beneficiaries can call Medicare at 1-800-633-4227, service representatives are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

PASSAGES, a service of California State University, Chico, supports the lives of adults in the communities it serves. For more information about PASSAGES services go to www.passagescenter.org.