

WELCOME TO YOUR

Medicare Scoop

Summer Edition

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IMPORTANT NEWS ABOUT YOUR MEDI-CAL

Take Action to Keep Your Medi-Cal

When the Public Health Emergency (PHE) officially started in 2020, it stopped Medi-Cal benefits from ending or being reduced. For this reason, Medi-Cal recipients have not done a renewal up until now, and those who were granted Medi-Cal during the PHE have never had a renewal.

Starting April 2023 with the end of the PHE, Medi-Cal is resuming to normal operations. California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) is conducting a statewide public information, education, and outreach campaign. Their focus is to raise awareness about the return of the annual Medi-Cal eligibility renewals and encourage Medi-Cal members to take the following steps to keep themselves and their families covered.

MAKE SURE YOUR INFORMATION IS UP TO DATE

Log into your Medi-Cal account or contact your local Medi-Cal office and report any new changes to your name, address, phone number, and email address, so your county can contact you.

CHECK YOUR MAIL

The Medi-Cal office will mail you a letter about your Medi-Cal eligibility. The letter will tell you if you need to complete a renewal form to see if you still qualify for Medi-Cal, or it will tell you that your Medi-Cal was renewed automatically and you won't need to take action.

COMPLETE YOUR RENEWAL FORM (IF YOU GET ONE)

If you received a renewal form, submit your information by mail, phone, in person, or online to help avoid a gap in your coverage.



Renewal forms will come in the mail in a bright yellow envelope. You must turn in any information that your local Medi-Cal office needs to renew your Medi-Cal.

Look for the deadline listed on your renewal form. You must respond by that date to keep your Medi-Cal coverage.



Save Money on Medicare APPLY TODAY!



Medicare Savings Programs MSPs

These are programs that help pay your Medicare Part A and Part B deductibles, copayments and coinsurance for people who qualify

HICAP can help you with:

- Eligibility screening
- Assistance completing and submitting the application to Department of Human Services

Low Income Subsidy/Extra Help

This program helps lower prescription drug costs. It provides assistance to help pay your Medicare Part D prescription drug plan premium, deductible and out of pocket costs for prescriptions.

HICAP can help you with:

- Eligibility screening
- Assistance completing and submitting the application to Social Security Administration

Medi-Cal Application Assistance for Medicare Beneficiaries

Medicare beneficiaries who want to apply for Medi-Cal for the first time or need assistance with renewals can now make a **HICAP** appointment Monday- Friday.

HICAP can help you with:

- General program questions
- Assistance completing and submitting forms
- Understanding "Notice of Actions"
- Assistance with "Share of Cost" elimination

APPLICATION ASSISTANCE IS ONLY A PHONE CALL AWAY



CALL HICAP TO SCHEDULE YOUR APPOINTMENT

 661-868-1000
1-800-434-0222

 Monday - Friday 8AM -5PM

 5357 Truxtun Ave
Bakersfield, CA 93309



Senior Medicare Patrol Corner



COVID-19 Test Kit Scams On the Rise

Article courtesy of Karen Fletcher, Comm. Director at CHA/SMP

Have you received any unwanted and/or unsolicited COVID-19 tests? If so, you're not alone. One of our top Medicare scams in California right now is COVID-19 test kit scams. Beneficiaries and their family members are reporting boxes of unwanted tests arriving on their doorsteps. And, in checking their Medicare Summary Notices, they are finding Medicare is being billed 4-5 times the cost of the tests or more. In some cases, Medicare is being billed multiple times for the same test.

Unfortunately, most of these scams are the result of fraudsters using stolen Medicare beneficiary information. In some cases these scammers buy stolen Medicare numbers online. In other cases, they con beneficiaries into giving them their Medicare numbers. Then the fraudsters use these Medicare numbers to bill Medicare a hefty amount for over-the-counter test kits, and beneficiaries receive test kits they never ordered. While it's mostly Medicare being billed and paying the claims, some beneficiaries have also been billed.

TIPS TO AVOID FRAUD

- **Beware of offers for "free" COVID-19 test kits in exchange for your personal financial information or Medicare number. This is a scam.** As the public health emergency due to COVID-19 ended on May 11, 2023, Medicare no longer covers these over-the-counter tests. Medicare does, however, continue to cover tests provided in a clinic, doctor's office, or other health care setting and processed by a laboratory. Some private Medicare Advantage plans may continue paying for the at-home tests.
- **Review your quarterly Medicare Summary Notices (MSNs)** to make sure all the items and services billed are ones you received.
- **Be cautious about any unsolicited requests for your personal, financial or medical identity and information. Medicare will not call or email you,** and will not contact you to offer products, services or benefits in exchange for your Medicare number.
- **Report any suspected fraud** to our California SMP at 1-855-613-7080 or HICAP at 661-868-1000



Paper Card or Plastic?

Article courtesy of Karen Fletcher, Comm. Director at CHA/SMP

We've all been asked the question of "paper or plastic" with grocery bags, but the same should NOT be true of your Medicare card. Watch out for scammers calling pretending to be with Medicare and offering you a plastic Medicare card. Medicare will NOT call you AND will NOT offer plastic cards. Medicare only provides them in paper. Scammers are just trying to steal your Medicare number and your identity.

If you receive such an offer, hang up and report it to **California Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) at 1-855-613-7080 or to your local HICAP at 661-868-1000. We are here to help you prevent Medicare fraud.**



Meet Your HICAP Volunteer Counselor

Thanks to our highly trained volunteers, the HICAP program can provide much needed assistance to Kern County Medicare beneficiaries and their families. Not only are they an essential part of our community, but they are also the advocates and the problem solvers, and we are so thankful for them. In this issue, we want to highlight one of our star volunteers. Meet Maria Medrano, HICAP Volunteer Counselor.



Mary, as we affectionally call her, worked in the medical field as a CMA for 7 years, she then transitioned to Kern County Behavioral Health for 3 years assisting psychiatry and clients with medical billing issues. Her experience working with diverse populations and her desire to help our most vulnerable population brought her to Aging and Adult Services in 2022. After completing an extensive 40+ hour training plus internship she received her registration from California Department of Aging and became a HICAP counselor.

When we asked Mary what her favorite part of being a counselor is, Mary said *"I enjoy being able to explain how Medicare works and help our clients feel less lost in all this information. It's also exciting to find savings programs that clients didn't know were available to them and help them apply for those programs."* When we asked Mary her thoughts on the importance of volunteering for HICAP she said *"Without HICAP volunteers there would be a lot more confused beneficiaries, paying more for premiums not knowing of savings programs available, and even fraud going by unnoticed. Medicare can be very stressful, and we need HICAP volunteers to assist beneficiaries and show them there is a light at the end of the tunnel."*

MORE ABOUT MARY...

Mary enjoys going on road trips, exploring new places and trying new foods, she enjoys hiking and relaxing at home with her cat Maple. Mary is a joy to work with, her compassion, empathy, and knowledge make her a big asset to our team and to our community. Thank you for everything you do, Mary!



SHIP
State Health Insurance
Assistance Program

KERN
COUNTY
AGING & ADULT SERVICES



SMP
Senior Medicare Patrol
Preventing Medicare Fraud



Become a HICAP Volunteer!

Learn how to help others
navigate through the
puzzling world of Medicare



**HICAP VOLUNTEERS ARE
HIGHLY TRAINED TO HELP
CLIENTS UNDERSTAND
MEDICARE AND ASSIST WITH:**

- Medicare Coverage Options
- Claim Denial Appeals
- Drug and Health Plan Comparisons
- Medi-Cal Application Assistance
- Preventing Medicare Fraud
- And much more...



**GIVE BACK TO
YOUR
COMMUNITY**

**ARE YOU READY TO START
A MEANINGFUL
VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE ?**

For more information or to
apply contact:

Carolina Oehler
Volunteer Coordinator
661.868.1058
oehlerc@kerncounty.com

Out in the Community

OLDER AMERICANS MONTH AND RESOURCE FAIR

On May 9th, the Kern County Board of Supervisors proclaimed the month of May 2023 as Older Americans Month in Kern County. Aging & Adult Services celebrated this recognition with a resource fair offering free document shredding, free advance health care directive preparations, pet adoptions, and giveaways.

Over 30 vendors were present providing resources and information to our community. Kern County HICAP hosted a series of short seminars educating the community on the services available to older and disabled adults and Medicare Fraud Prevention.



The theme of this year's celebration was "Aging Unbound", and through this theme, Aging & Adult Services encouraged the community to embrace change and promoted the importance of enjoying an independent and fulfilling life by connecting with others and being involved in the community. Thank you to all who attended and to the vendors for making this event a huge success!

ELDER ABUSE CONFERENCE

On June 15th, Kern County Aging & Adult Services hosted the 24th Annual Elder Abuse Prevention Conference at Hodel's Country Dining. This year's Elder Abuse Conference focused on the overview of Adult Protective Services. Through this training, the participants got an opportunity to learn about the scams that impact our seniors, how to report elder abuse, and the resources available through Victim Witness Services, Long-Term Care Ombudsman, APS Home safe program, LPS/Public Guardian, and Public Conservator.



Over 200 people attended this event including law enforcement, district attorneys, medical providers, retirement home and care facility staff, other community organizations and social service agencies. Bringing awareness of elder abuse is a critical part of ensuring all seniors' human rights are respected and protected every day, and in recognition of this important issue the Board of Supervisors of the County of Kern officially proclaimed June 2023 as Elder Abuse Awareness month in Kern County.

Save the Date



SENIOR DAY AT THE FAIR!



Senior Day at the Fair is back!
Join us on **Friday, September 22nd**
at the Kern County Fairgrounds.



Seniors 62+ will receive free admission and parking most of the day. Doors open at 9am with an opening ceremony starting at 10am. Enjoy dance performances, live entertainment, visit the farmhouse and livestock, ride the "Western Express" through food row and the games, and visit your community vendors who will be providing great information and giveaways.



Make sure you stop by and visit our Kern County Aging & Adult Services tent, we will be giving away lots of prizes, and vital resources for all!



MEDICARE OPEN ENROLLMENT IS AROUND THE CORNER

Open Enrollment, also known as the Annual Election Period, is the time of year when you can change your Medicare coverage or review your current health and drug coverage to see if it still meets your needs for the following year. Here are six things to keep in mind while you are reviewing or changing coverage:

- Any change you make during Open Enrollment will take effect January 1, 2024.
- You can **JOIN** a new Medicare Advantage Plan or Part D prescription drug plan.
- You can **SWITCH** from Original Medicare to a Medicare Advantage Plan or vice versa .
- If you have a Medicare Advantage Plan or a Part D plan, you should receive an Annual Notice of Change or Evidence of Coverage from your plan. Review these notices for any changes in the plan's cost, benefits, and/or rules for the upcoming year.
- Even if you are satisfied with your current coverage, it's always a good idea to see how your plan compares with others.
- **Get help!** HICAP Counselors can help you understand your coverage options and compare plans based on the drugs you take, the pharmacy you visit, and your drug cost.



**It's time to book your
Medicare Open Enrollment appointment with HICAP!**

Open Enrollment is October 15 - December 7

KERN COUNTY
AGING & ADULT SERVICES

Call us today, appointments fill up fast!
661-868-1000 or 1-800-434-0222

 **SHIP**
State Health Insurance
Assistance Program

Community Education & Outreach

Kern County HICAP staff participate in a broad range of outreach activities to improve community awareness of our programs and increase service delivery to our diverse Kern County Population.

Our community education efforts focus on helping Medicare beneficiaries and their families develop a better understanding of their health care rights and options so that they can make informed choices. HICAP does not endorse or recommend any specific insurance products.

REQUEST A FREE PRESENTATION OR WEBINAR TODAY!

Does your community know about our services? Schedule a speaker for your next meeting or community event.

- General Services Overview
- Medicare Open Enrollment
- Medicare Basics
- Protecting Yourself from Medicare Fraud
- How to Save Money on Medicare Costs
- And much more...



**SHIP**
State Health Insurance Assistance Program

Navigating Medicare

REQUEST YOURS NOW



Don't miss our Fall Educational Webinar

2024 MEDICARE OPEN ENROLLMENT

During this webinar you will learn:

- Why is Open Enrollment important
- What changes can you make
- How to obtain a plan comparison or review from HICAP
- How to save money on prescription drugs
- How to prevent enrollment fraud and marketing plan violations



FRIDAY, OCTOBER 27TH, 2023

10:00 - 11:00 AM

SCAN QR CODE TO REGISTER FOR FREE!

If you need help registering, learning how to use Zoom or for free technical assistance the day of the seminar please call or text Digital Divide Program at 661-448-2540

[HTTPS://WWW.KERNCOUNTY.COM/HICAP](https://www.kerncounty.com/hicap)

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