

Medicare Part D & Prescription Drug Coverage

This notice is being provided again to all **RETIREEES** enrolled in County of Kern sponsored retiree health benefit plans (hereafter “Kern County Health Benefits”) because prescription drug coverage was added to Medicare in 2006. Prescription coverage became available January 1, 2006 and is known as Medicare Part D.

If you, or any dependent you have enrolled in Kern County Health Benefits, are eligible for Medicare, you should carefully read this notice. If you are not eligible for Medicare and you do not have any dependents enrolled in the County Health Benefits who are eligible for Medicare, you should read this notice so that you understand the Medicare prescription drug benefits that will become available when someone becomes Medicare eligible.

The following six paragraphs apply to anyone (retiree subscribers and/or dependents) who is Medicare eligible and is enrolled in County Group Retiree Health Benefits. “You” and “yours” refers to the Medicare eligible person(s).

Kaiser Permanente Senior Advantage, HealthNet Seniority Plus, Blue Shield 65 Plus, HealthNet Point-of-Service POS/COB, Anthem Blue Cross Preferred Medicare PPO or Anthem Blue Cross Gold enrollees: You should NOT enroll in an individual Medicare Part D plan. Please contact your health plan for questions about your drug coverage, including questions about Medicare Part D. If you enroll independently in a non-County sponsored Medicare Part D plan without dropping your County sponsored coverage, it is likely that Medicare will invalidate your County plan. Please note that these plans are considered to be “Creditable Coverage”, which means they are expected to pay, on average, at least what the Medicare Part D plans are expected to pay.

Anthem Blue Cross Silver enrollees: There is no prescription drug coverage on this plan. Therefore, this is not “Creditable Coverage”. It is your choice whether you enroll in a Medicare Part D plan. However, if you do not enroll in Medicare Part D when it first becomes available to you, you will have to pay more for the monthly premium if you enroll later. If after May 15, 2006, you go 63 days or longer without prescription drug coverage that’s at least as good as Medicare’s prescription drug coverage; your monthly premium will go up at least 1% per month for every month after May 15, 2006 that you did not have that coverage. Medicare (CMS) provides information explaining your rights and choices.

Kaiser Permanente Under enrollees: You should not be enrolled in this plan if you have Medicare. If you are, please contact Kern County Health & Wellness immediately.

Kern Legacy Share Select, Kern Legacy Network Plus, Kern Legacy Max Choice and Kern Legacy Classic Choice (Kern County's self-insured medical plans known as Kern Legacy Health Plans) have prescription coverage with CVS Caremark. It is our understanding that you cannot have Medicare Part D and the Kern Legacy Health Plans. You must select one or the other. You are encouraged to review the available options for Medicare recipients and determine if you are better off with County Health Benefits or Medicare Part D coverage. If you decide to keep the County of Kern plan, you are not required to do anything. Just keep the "Creditable Coverage" notice in a safe place in the event you apply for Medicare Part D at a later time. If you decide to enroll in Medicare Part D coverage (either through Medicare or one of Medicare's partners), you must notify the Kern County Health & Wellness of your Part D enrollment. If we are notified by Medicare that you are required to drop the County of Kern Employee Medical Benefit Plan, we will terminate County coverage (including medical and drug coverage) for the person enrolled in Medicare Part D. If that person is the retiree, dependents will also be removed from County Health Benefits. Please note that the County of Kern health plans are expected to pay, on average, at least what Medicare Part D plans are expected to pay.

The Kern Legacy Health Plans have a provision that states that Medicare Part A and Part B are primary for retiree group members who are eligible for Medicare. This means that if you are eligible for Medicare Part A and Part B, but have not enrolled, you will pay out-of-pocket for anything that Medicare Part A and Part B would have paid if you had been enrolled. This is in addition to any other out-of-pocket costs you would have incurred without Medicare eligibility.

Medicare Open Enrollment is held in the Fall. If you are enrolled in one of the Kern Legacy Health Plans and are unsure whether you are eligible for or enrolled in Medicare Part A and/or Part B, contact Medicare as directed below.

Kern County Health & Wellness cannot provide you with assistance with details regarding Medicare itself or individual Medicare Part D plans. Details can be obtained directly from Medicare. For more information you may visit www.medicare.gov, or by contacting them at 1-800-MEDICARE, (TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048).

For questions regarding the Kern Legacy Health Plans' prescription drug benefits, you can contact CVS Caremark at 1(888) 479-2000. Please contact Anthem Blue Cross, Blue Shield, Kaiser Permanente, or HealthNet directly for questions about prescription drug coverage under these plans.

Feel free to contact Kern County Health & Wellness at (661) 868-3182 for any general Kern County benefits and eligibility questions.