

How did beneficiaries learn about the drug benefit and make plan choices?

ISSUE: Did beneficiaries have the information and help they needed to make informed decisions about the drug benefit? What factors were most important in deciding on a specific plan? What outreach and educational strategies were most effective for beneficiaries?

KEY POINTS: Since January 1st, Medicare has offered a voluntary drug benefit through stand-alone drug plans (PDPs) and Medicare Advantage plans (MA-PDs). Beneficiaries in every region of the country have many plan choices available to them. MedPAC is conducting research on how beneficiaries learned about the drug benefit and their individual choices. We are also examining the factors that were most important to them as they made their decisions to enroll or not enroll in a plan. This work will give us the opportunity to evaluate whether the range of resources available to beneficiaries met their needs so they could make informed decisions about their plan choices.

Our work plan includes three interrelated studies:

- A beneficiary survey
- Structured interviews with representatives from state health insurance assistance programs and other beneficiary counselors
- Beneficiary focus groups

At this meeting, staff will present our work plan for a chapter in the June 2006 report.

ACTION: Commissioners should discuss whether the work plan addresses issues of concern to them.

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