



# Department on Aging help available via Senior Health Insurance Program (SHIP)

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SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department on Aging’s (IDoA) Senior Health Insurance Program (SHIP) is reminding seniors of the Medicare Open Enrollment deadline that is approaching on Friday, December 7th. SHIP offers free counseling assistance to Medicare-eligible individuals and their caregivers during this annual enrollment opportunity.

During open enrollment, eligible adults can adjust Medicare Advantage or Medicare prescription drug coverage, move from original Medicare to a Medicare Advantage plan - or vice versa - switch between Medicare Advantage plans, join a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan, or switch or drop existing drug plans without penalty. To view the 2019 drug and health plans on your own and to find out more about Medicare options, including preventative services now covered, visit the federal Medicare website at [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov). Medicare customer service representatives are available 24 hours a day and they can help you enroll in a drug or health plan over the phone at: 1-800-633-4227.

There are over 350 SHIP offices across Illinois, and the agency stands ready to refer clients to their closest site, which can schedule an appointment to assist with open enrollment.

“I encourage seniors to make an appointment at their earliest convenience, because as during every open enrollment season, we anticipate it’ll be very busy with people seeking help,” said Jean Bohnhoff, Director of IDoA. “Our SHIP counselors are ready to help you make sense of the complicated Medicare system and to make the best choices for your healthcare as we prioritize respecting yesterday, supporting today, and hoping for tomorrow.”

SHIP counselors work through the Medicare.gov system to help seniors and people with disabilities make the best choices for their individual situation. **Contact SHIP, by calling 1-800-252-8966**, weekdays 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. For more information about

SHIP, including a list of SHIP locations, visit the website at: <http://www.illinois.gov/aging/ship/Pages/default.aspx>.

SHIP is not affiliated with any insurance company, and counselors do not sell or solicit any type of insurance. SHIP counselors in the field help seniors and people with disabilities on Medicare understand the options available to them. They also educate and answer questions about Medicare plans and options.