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Oregon program awarded grant to educate Medicare recipients *Growing baby boomer population focus of effort*

(Salem) – Federal officials recently awarded Oregon’s Senior Health Insurance Benefits Assistance (SHIBA) program \$631,587 to help Medicare beneficiaries and their families learn more about their health care choices.

The annual grant from the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is up nearly 10 percent from last year and covers the fiscal year that began April 1. The Oregon SHIBA program is one of 54 state organizations that receive a combined \$46.5 million annually to provide one-on-one counseling to current and newly eligible Medicare beneficiaries and their caregivers.

Oregon will use the money to work with the growing number of baby boomers who are becoming eligible for Medicare. In addition, the program will focus on reaching individuals who are most likely to qualify for help with prescription drug costs, beneficiaries with disabilities, and diverse racial and ethnic groups, particularly those with limited English skills.

One way SHIBA will do this is by providing grants to 22 local community-based organizations that help the state office recruit, train, and certify more than 300 volunteer counselors statewide.

“SHIBA will use its grant funds to continue state and locally based one-on-one counseling services for people with Medicare, their families, and trusted representatives,” said Lisa Emerson, SHIBA program manager. “This year, our counselors will be reminding clients that the Affordable Care Act provides enhanced Medicare preventive benefits and that Medicare’s annual enrollment period, when many people change plans, will be Oct. 15 to Dec. 7.”

Call the SHIBA Helpline at 1-800-722-4134 to request Medicare information, schedule a free counseling appointment, or volunteer. Consumers will be asked to enter their ZIP code, which will route the call to a local SHIBA counseling program.

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SHIBA is part of the Insurance Division of the Department of Consumer and Business Services, Oregon’s largest business regulatory and consumer protection agency. For more information about SHIBA and the Department of Consumer and Business Services, visit www.oregonshiba.org or www.dcbs.oregon.gov.