

Medicare Modernization Act

DHS MMA Project

Medicare Prescription Drug Program

Choosing a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan

Overview

People with Medicare who want to receive prescription drug coverage through Medicare must enroll in a Prescription Drug Plan (PDP) or a Medicare Advantage with Prescription Drugs (MA-PD).

- PDP - A private companies offering stand-alone plans that only provide prescription drug coverage.
- MA-PD - A private health care organization providing comprehensive health benefits including prescription drug coverage.

When considering which plan to choose:

Plan Type

- Some people like coordinated care. You receive all your benefits through one company. Your primary care doctor coordinates all of your care. There is usually less paperwork and less out of pocket expenses. You may be required to use approved doctors and may need a referral to see a specialist. If this is okay with you, a MA-PD may be your best option.
- Some people like “traditional” or original Medicare. You can choose any doctor that accepts Medicare. You can go to specialists without a referral. You will need to make sure your co-payments are paid, and may have higher out-of-pocket expenses if you do not have a Medicare Supplemental Insurance (Medigap). If you want to stay in original Medicare, a PDP may be your best option.

Premium Questions (This is separate from your Part B premium.)

- Compare the monthly premium amount.
 - Are the monthly premium “worth it” compared to the benefit and other plans’ premiums?
 - If you have a subsidy, does it cover the premium?

Formulary Questions (Approved drug lists.)

- Does the plan formulary cover your needed medications including dosage?
 - E.g., 850 mg may be approved but 1000 mg is not.

- Does the plan cover more than one month at a time? (E.g., 60, 90 days)?
 - Do you have to use mail-order for multiple months supply?
 - ◆ If yes, does that work for you?
- Does the plan have a good “transition” process to help you to transfer to new medications if your current medications are not on their formulary?
- Does the plan clearly explain its exception process to request payment for drugs not covered on their formulary?

Pharmacy Questions

- Does the plan contract with your pharmacy?
 - If not, can you still use your local pharmacy (ies)?
 - Do you have to pay more to use “non-contracted” pharmacies?
- If you live in a long-term care facility, does the plan contract with the facility’s preferred pharmacy?
- Are there different prices depending on which pharmacy you use?
- Is mail order allowed or required?
 - Is there a different price for mail order?
 - How quickly will the mail order pharmacy get you your medications?

Controls on Access to Drugs

- Does the plan use prior authorizations, quantity limitations or restrictions?
- What are the limits on the number of prescriptions in a month?
- What are the limits on the number of pills in each prescription?

Other Issues to Consider

- Does the plan offer supplemental benefits?
 - What is included in the supplemental benefits?
 - Is there a higher premium for these benefits?
- Who is the plan sponsor?
 - Do they have complaints filed against them with the insurance division or the Better Business Bureau?