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NEWS RELEASE

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Annual Medicare Enrollment
Dates and benefit changes seniors should know

BOISE ID (November 15, 2010) – With annual enrollment for Medicare under way, the Idaho Department of Insurance wants seniors to be aware of changes this year that will affect their benefits.

Annual enrollment runs from November 15 to December 31, 2010. From January 1 to February 14, 2011, Medicare enrollees can switch to Original Medicare and have the option of enrolling in a Medicare prescription drug plan.

“The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act has provided some significant changes to Medicare that seniors should be aware of,” said Department Director Bill Deal. “Among those changes are a number of free preventive services and yearly wellness exams.”

Beneficiaries whose Medicare prescription drug plans have a gap in coverage – often referred to as the “doughnut hole” – may get a 50% discount on Medicare-covered brand name drugs and a 7% discount on Medicare-covered generic prescriptions while in the “doughnut hole.”

Beginning in 2011, Medicare Advantage plans cannot charge more than traditional Medicare for chemotherapy, dialysis, skilled nursing care and other services. Seniors are urged to review their plans to see if preventive and wellness improvements to Original Medicare will be available to them.

Agents who sell Medicare plans must be licensed by the Department of Insurance, may not make unsolicited contacts, must arrange in advance the type of products that will be discussed during pre-arranged sales appointments and may not discuss or try to sell any other types of products during the sales call.

A Consumer Alert with more detailed information about this year’s changes to Medicare is available on the Department’s website at www.doi.idaho.gov. Senior Health Insurance Benefits Advisors (SHIBA), 800-247-4422, is also available to answer questions seniors may have about their options.

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