

Mysteries of Medicare: Medicare's Annual Open Enrollment Period (AOEP) 2021

Effective July 1, 2021, the APPRISE program was given a new name. APPRISE counselors may have been your previous contacts for assistance with Medicare-related information. The APPRISE program is now called *Pennsylvania Medicare Education and Decision Insight (PA MEDI)*. You will find that the program and the counselors have not changed; we are just operating under this new name.

AOEP is a once-a-year opportunity between October 15th and December 7th for most Medicare beneficiaries to make changes to Medicare Advantage (MAPD) and Part D Prescription Drug Plans (PDP). In early October, you will receive a mailing with information about your current plan called Annual Notice of Change (ANOC). The ANOC may appear daunting, but you really need to check for the plan's 2022 premium, formulary changes, preferred pharmacy changes, copays and drug tiers for your medications.

Medicare beneficiaries who have access to a computer would benefit from setting up a "MyMedicare" account on the Medicare.gov website. This account with a username and password will give you ongoing information about claims from your providers, and will make evaluating your PDP easier.

If you would like assistance with an evaluation of your MAPD or your PDP options, PA MEDI counselors are trained and available to provide FREE, personalized, unbiased counseling. Due to continuing COVID-19 concerns and restrictions, in-person appointments are not widely available. Most of the counseling will be done by phone. You may call a senior center or the Department of Aging AOEP scheduling line after September 15th (610-344-5234) to make an appointment for your phone conference. You will be prompted to leave a message and your contact information. A PA MEDI counselor will return your call within one business day.

If you are new to Medicare during the AOEP, counselors are available to help you with Medicare enrollment and can provide information about your other options. Please call our general Helpline 610-344-5004 for this assistance.