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**EAST TEXAS COUNCIL OF
GOVERNMENTS**



PRESS RELEASE

New Medicare Open Enrollment Period Dates & Savings Programs Available for Part D Prescription Drug Assistance

Area Agency on Aging Offers Benefits Counseling Services for Medicare Recipients

Kilgore, TX, September 7, 2011: The customary Medicare Open Enrollment Period has now been moved to October 15 through December 7 of each year to avoid the holiday rush season. The East Texas Area Agency on Aging (AAA), administered by ETCOG, has certified benefits counselors to help seniors with choosing their prescription drug plan and enrolling in the Extra Help/Low Income Subsidy and Medicare Savings Programs available for Medicare recipients. The program, paid for by Social Security and the State of Texas, offers seniors the opportunity to get help paying their Part B and Part D medical premiums, deductibles and co-pay costs and also prevents a coverage gap.

Trained counselors are available by appointment with the AAA to help complete an Extra Help / Low Income Subsidy application. The counselors are available to help individuals get answers to questions, review Medicare plans and see if the individual is eligible to qualify for extra help.

The monthly income limit for an individual to qualify is \$1,361 or \$1,839 for a couple. Resources limit, including property, stocks, bonds, and savings is \$12,640 for an individual and \$25,260 for a couple. Some exemptions apply such as a homestead, one vehicle, personal belongings, burial plot and up to \$1,500 for burial expenses are not included in resources. Our counselors suggest seniors call even if their income is higher than these limits because only certain income sources are counted.

For an appointment or for more information, contact Dovie Lawrence at 903.984.8641 x213 or Toll Free at 1.800.442.8845. Seniors will need to have their red, white and blue Medicare card and a list of their prescriptions for appointments.

About ETCOG:

The East Texas Council of Governments (ETCOG) is a voluntary association of counties, cities, school districts and special districts within the fourteen-county East Texas region. ETCOG assists local governments in planning for common needs, cooperating for mutual benefit and coordinating for sound regional development. Established in 1970, ETCOG, either directly, or through its contractors, provides programs and services for East Texas seniors, employers, and job seekers. ETCOG and its contractors also build the 9-1-1 emergency call delivery system, provide peace officer training and homeland security planning services; and deliver rural transportation services, business finance programs, and environmental grant funding for the region.