



# PRESS RELEASE

## Area Agency on Aging to Assist Seniors with Medicare Open Enrollment and “Extra Help” Program Offering Prescription Assistance

### *22 Local Open Enrollment Events Scheduled*

**Kilgore, TX, October 8, 2014:** Making ends meet should not mean going without your medications. If you have limited income and resources, you may qualify for Extra Help to pay for some health care and prescription drug costs. The Area Agency on Aging of East Texas (AAA) provides seniors an opportunity to speak with a certified benefits counselor to see if they qualify for Extra Help and assist with selecting a Medicare plan. On October 15, Open Enrollment will begin for Medicare beneficiaries to decide which Medicare plan is right for them, and if so, which plan they should choose. The AAA will be conducting Open Enrollment Events and providing one-on-one assistance for Medicare Open Enrollment until it closes on December 7th.

Drug costs in 2015 for most people who qualify for Extra Help will be no more than \$2.65 for each generic drug and \$6.60 for each brand-name drug. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services estimates that more than 2 million people with Medicare may be eligible for Extra Help, but aren't currently enrolled to take advantage of these savings. A recent law changed how your income and assets are counted:

- Life insurance policies don't count as resources
- Any help you get from relatives, friends, and others to pay for household expenses—like food, mortgage, rent, heating fuel or gas, electricity, water, and property taxes—doesn't count as income

### **Many People Qualify and Don't Know It**

Even if you were previously turned down for Extra Help due to income or resource levels, you should reapply. If you qualify, you'll get help paying for Medicare prescription drug coverage premiums, copayments, and deductibles. To qualify, you must make less than \$17,505 a year (or \$23,595 for married couples). Even if your annual income is higher, you still may be able to get some extra help. Your resources must also be limited to \$13,440 (or \$26,860 for married couples). Resources include bank accounts, stocks, and bonds, but not your house or car.

### **There's No Cost or Obligation to Apply**

It's easy and free to apply for “Extra Help.” You or a family member, trusted counselor, or caregiver can apply online at [socialsecurity.gov/i1020](http://socialsecurity.gov/i1020) or call Social Security at 1-800-772-1213. TTY users should call 1-800-325-0778. All the information you give is confidential. You can also get help locally from the Area Agency on Aging of East Texas by calling 1-800-442-8845. To learn more about Medicare prescription drug coverage, visit [Medicare.gov](http://Medicare.gov), or call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048.

There are currently 22 presentations scheduled throughout the Area Agency on Aging's 14-county region during the Open Enrollment period. A list of the scheduled presentations can be viewed [here](#). Those who cannot attend a presentation, but would like to speak with a certified benefits counselor, please call the AAA for assistance at 1-800-442-8845 or 903-218-6500.

**About Area Agency on Aging**

The Area Agency on Aging of East Texas is designated by the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services to coordinate services for persons in East Texas who are 60 or older, with particular attention to low-income minority older individuals, older individuals with limited English proficiency, and older individuals residing in rural areas. Special programs include benefits counseling/legal assistance; information, referral, and assistance; nutrition programs including Meals on Wheels; care coordination; caregiver support; home repair and modification; emergency response system; transportation; the Ombudsman program in which information is provided to nursing home residents and their families about residents' rights. The Area Agency on Aging is a program of ETCOG serving its 14 county region.

**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.