



PRESS RELEASE

Area Agency on Aging to assist with Medicare's "Extra Help" program offering prescription assistance during Open Enrollment
Open Enrollment events scheduled in all AAA's 14-county service area

Kilgore, TX, October 15, 2015: 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. Drug costs in 2016 for most people who qualify for Extra Help will be no more than \$2.95 for each generic drug and \$7.40 for each brand-name drug. The Centers for Medicare & 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. Starting in 2016, life insurance policies don't count as resources. And, 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 \$17,655 a year (or \$23,895 for married couples). Even if your annual income is higher, you may still qualify for some extra help. Your resources must also be limited to \$13,640 (or \$27,250 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, a family member, trusted counselor, or caregiver can apply online at socialsecurity.gov/i1020 or call Social Security at 1-800-772-1213. TTY users should call 1-800-325-0778. You can also get help in your community from your State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP), Area Agencies on Aging (AAA), the Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRC), and many tribal organizations. For information about how to contact these organizations, visit Eldercare.gov.

Local Scheduled Presentations

There is an event schedule for every county that the Area Agency on Aging services. These counties include Anderson, Camp, Cherokee, Gregg, Harrison, Henderson, Marion, Panola, Rains, Rusk, Smith, Upshur, Van Zandt and Wood. A list of the scheduled presentations can be viewed at <http://www.etcog.org/654/Open-Enrollment.htm>. Those that cannot attend a presentation but would like to speak with a Certified Benefits Counselor, please call the Area Agency on Aging for assistance at 1-800-442-8845 or call 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.

PROUDLY SERVING 14 COUNTIES

ANDERSON CAMP CHEROKEE GREGG HARRISON HENDERSON MARION PANOLA RAINS RUSK SMITH UPSHUR VAN ZANDT WOOD