



THE ADVOCATE

September 2013

Medicaid Expansion Passes

After several months of heated debate, the Senate voted on Tuesday August 27 to reform Medicaid and expand eligibility to those up to 133% of the Federal Poverty Level. The Senate version of HB 4714 moved back to the House which concurred with the changes made in the senate. The legislation now moves to Governor Snyder's desk for Signature, which is expected in the coming weeks.

This legislation fell 2 votes short of the 26 needed to give it immediate effect. Medicaid reform is expected to take effect in March of 2014. This delay in start date will cause Michigan to lose out on millions of dollars per day of federal matching funds and which may reduce overall projected savings to the state's general fund.

With the passing of this legislation, the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) can begin seeking the two federal waivers needed to make the expansion viable. MDCH Director Jim Haveman is confident the federal waivers will be granted.

This legislation will provide Medicaid health coverage to nearly 470,000 uninsured Michiganders, including approximately 70,000 seniors between the age of 55 and 64.

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The Affordable Care Act: What Seniors Need to Know

In March of 2010 President Obama signed the Affordable Care Act (ACA), also known as Obamacare, into law. This legislation, upheld as constitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court, will impact Medicare and health care for older adults. The purpose of this frequently asked question guide is to help alleviate confusion on how the ACA will impact Medicare. If you have further questions call the Area Agency on Aging 1-B at: 1-800-852-7795.

1. I am between the ages of 55 and 64, how will the Affordable Care Act impact me?

If you have job-based health care you like, you can keep it. If you are unhappy with your job-based coverage you can explore other health care options through the Health Care Exchange Marketplace. If you are losing your job-based insurance you can purchase coverage through the Marketplace. You can also see if you qualify for low or no cost insurance options. You also have the right to choose a COBRA continuation coverage which allows you to keep your job-based insurance for you and your family for up to 18 months.

The Affordable Care Act: What Seniors Need to Know *Continued...*

If you are self-employed and have no employees, you are not considered an employer. You can explore the Health Care Marketplace for a plan that meets your needs.

If you do not have job-based or private health coverage in 2014 you may be subject to a fee. The fee in 2014 is 1% of your annual income or \$95 per person for the year, whichever is higher. The fee will increase each year. It is important to note that if you do not have coverage and pay the fee, you will still be responsible for 100% of your health care costs.

2. Will my existing Medicare benefits be reduced or taken away as a result of the Affordable Care Act?

No, under the ACA your existing guaranteed Medicare-covered health benefits will not be reduced or taken away. Your ability to choose your own doctor is also protected under the ACA.

3. I have high prescription costs. Will my Medicare Part D benefits be affected by the ACA?

Yes, if you reached the prescription coverage gap known as the "donut hole," you received a one time tax rebate of \$250 from Medicare to assist in your drug costs. If you reach the donut hole now, you will already receive a 50% discount on name brand drugs covered by Medicare Part D. This 50% discount will increase to 75% by the year 2020. This will save seniors who reach the donut hole hundreds of dollars annually.

4. Did the ACA expand Medicare benefits?

Yes, the ACA now covers many preventative services such as flu shots, diabetes screenings, mammograms and other cancer screenings for free. Beginning in September 23, 2010 when pieces of the ACA took effect through March of 2013, about 105 million Americans received at least one preventative service at no out of pocket cost including about 2.4 million Michiganians. Additionally, every year you can now get a free Wellness Visit with your doctor. This offers a chance to sit down and spend more time with your doctor discussing your health and health goals.

5. What about Medicare cuts and tax increases?

The ACA cut about \$716 billion in future Medicare spending over the first 10 years, mostly through cuts in future reimbursements for hospital, doctor and home care services, as well as payments to Medicare Advantage health plans. There is a significant risk that these planned reductions may result in reduced benefits and access in the future. However, the changes have also resulted in an improved outlook for the fiscal viability of Medicare, extending the date that the programs will be solvent to 2029, up by 12 years.

Visit www.healthlawguide.aarp.org for a personalized report on how the ACA may affect you.

Federal Budget Process Update

With the Federal fiscal year (FY) 2013 set to expire on September 30 the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate remain billions apart on FY 2014 spending levels. The point of contention stems from opposing views on sequestration – \$1.5 trillion in forced spending cuts over 10 years to non-mandatory programs which include defense and domestic programs.

The U.S. House has accounted for the continuation of sequestration in their budget proposal of \$967 billion dollars shifting defense cuts to domestic programs. The U.S. Senate proposal assumes the end of sequestration through alternative deficit reduction options. Senate appropriators have produced a budget of \$1.058 trillion.

With a difference of \$91 billion between the House and Senate, it is likely that budget discussions will continue well into FY 2014, requiring a continuing resolution to provide temporary funding for governmental agencies for part or all of FY 2014. Traditionally a continuing resolution funds programs at the previous year levels.

Meals on Wheels Wins Big!

It is official; Meals on Wheels won \$15,000 in Greektown Casino's "Free Ride Car-A-Day Giveaway!" Thank you for all who voted to support Meals on Wheels. Nearly 3,500 more meals will be able to be provided to homebound seniors and persons with disabilities in the AAA 1-B Region of Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair and Washtenaw counties.

 **GREEKTOWN**
CASINO-HOTEL

DATE: 08/10/2013

PAY TO THE ORDER OF: Meals On Wheels AMOUNT: \$15,000

Fifteen Thousand and $\frac{00}{100}$ DOLLARS

Free Ride Charity Program MEMO

Greektown Casino-Hotel SIGNATURE

Announcements

Michigan Intergenerational Network presents: **Minds on Art**

Free workshop hosted by the Michigan Intergenerational Network:
Tuesday, October 8, 2013, 10:00am to 11:30am
Detroit Institute of Art
5200 Woodward Ave • Detroit, MI 48202

The event will discuss Minds on Art, a free 6-week program for people living with dementia and their care partners, which provides a unique opportunity for persons in the early and mid-stages of the disease to create meaningful memories through art. Participants will explore artworks and gain benefits in cognitive stimulation and building new relationships.

Space is limited. For reservations,
contact Kay Brown at 586-468-8118
or at kaynana@wowway.com.
www.miintergen.org

The mission of the Michigan Intergenerational Network is to promote intergenerational understanding through education, consultation, and information dissemination.



Follow Us on Twitter! @AdvocacyAAA1B



For up to date information on advocacy issues of interest to seniors, follow us on Twitter. Our name is @AdvocacyAAA1B



The Area Agency on Aging 1-B (AAA 1-B) is a nonprofit agency serving the needs of older adults in Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair, and Washtenaw counties.

Contact Ryan Cowmeadow, (248) 262-1282 or by e-mail at rcowmeadow@aaa1b.com to join the Senior Advocacy Network or receive copies of AAA 1-B reports referenced in The Advocate.