

**Message One: A Call to Action from
the Assistant Secretary for Aging, Josefina G. Carbonell
Thursday, April 7, 2005**

Thank you for your efforts last year during the early implementation of the transitional assistance under the Medicare Prescription Discount Drug Card. You were an instrumental partner with us to help low-income Medicare beneficiaries access new benefits that will save them money. Together, we reached over 20 million beneficiaries and their caregivers, including many who are the most difficult to reach – low-income, minority, and rural beneficiaries.

The time has come again for trusted community aging service organizations such as yours to assist Medicare beneficiaries with information and assistance. Over the next year, HHS will continue its implementation of the most important provision of the Medicare Modernization Act: the new drug benefit that goes into effect January 1, 2006. Our missions provide us a historic opportunity to work again to ensure that Medicare beneficiaries can make informed decisions about their health care coverage. For this reason, AoA is reaching out to all elderly individuals to ensure that they can take full advantage of the new benefits that Medicare will provide to them. We want to partner with you to make access to these new benefits possible for as many older Americans as possible.

To help you as you help seniors, AoA has developed a special website, www.aoa.gov/medicare, that will provide you with up to date information and resources. Please join us in this partnership by registering online. You can sign up for any or all of the following:

- Information - *receive updates and information from AoA and CMS on an on-going basis*
- Dissemination – *share important new benefit information and provide materials to Medicare beneficiaries and their families*
- Event Coordination – *provide AoA with listings of upcoming events in your area as well as host events and enrollment workshops for Medicare beneficiaries and their families*
- Enrollment – *provide personalized counseling and enrollment services for Medicare beneficiaries on the Limited-Income Subsidy and on the Part D drug coverage*

This is about helping the people we serve. We value your partnership and your commitment to providing older Americans with the quality of life they so deserve. I look forward to working with you again in the implementation of this very important benefit for our elders.