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Oregon Senior Health Insurance Benefits Assistance (SHIBA) program awarded 2009 grant funding

(Salem) – The State of Oregon's Senior Health Insurance Benefits Assistance (SHIBA) Program is receiving \$490,527 to help Medicare beneficiaries in Oregon get more information about their health care choices. Oregon SHIBA is a federal State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP).

The funds are part of the \$35.8 million the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is distributing to the 54 SHIPs that provide Medicare beneficiaries with local, personalized assistance on a wide variety of Medicare and health insurance topics.

“SHIBA serves a critical role in providing local, accessible information and support to people with Medicare all across Oregon,” said SHIBA Program Manager Lisa Emerson. “Annual CMS federal funding will help to ensure that SHIBA continues to work with local governments, community-based organizations and other partners in Oregon to help meet the needs of all people with Medicare.”

CMS expects the SHIPs to use the 2009 funding to conduct targeted community-based outreach to people with Medicare who may be unable to access other sources of information. SHIPs will also provide outreach and assistance to current and newly eligible Medicare beneficiaries and their caregivers, with a special emphasis on reaching people who will most likely be eligible for Medicare's low-income subsidy if they enroll in Medicare prescription drug coverage.

Oregon depends on the annual CMS SHIP grant funds to continue to provide free, local, and unbiased Medicare counseling services to all people with Medicare and their caregivers throughout Oregon. The state SHIBA office in Salem and SHIBA-sponsoring organizations at the local county level recruit, train, and certify volunteer counselors to provide one-on-one help with comparing and enrolling in Medicare health and drug plans, applying for subsidy programs to help pay for Medicare costs, reviewing medical bills, assisting with consumer complaints, and filing appeals. To make an in-person appointment or receive by-phone counseling assistance, call SHIBA's toll-free Statewide Helpline at 1-800-722-4134. For information, go to <http://www.oregon.gov/DCBS/SHIBA/>.

CMS will continue to support the quality of services provided by SHIPs through training, technical assistance, the SHIP Resource Center, and the online tools at www.medicare.gov to assist people with Medicare.

SHIBA is part of the Oregon Department of Consumer and Business Services.

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