

New CMS Initiative Helps to Assist and Identify Individuals Who Care For Medicare Beneficiaries as Caregivers

Ask Medicare provides online information, tools, and materials for caregivers

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) today launched Ask Medicare, a new initiative to help family caregivers –those who are family members or friends who help people with Medicare -- access and use valuable healthcare information, services and resources.

More than 44 million Americans, more than one in five adults, provide care to a loved one, friend or neighbor, valued in economic terms at \$350 billion annually, according to a recent report by AARP. The new initiative will provide a one-stop Web page for caregivers www.medicare.gov/caregivers that provides easy access to useful information about Medicare and other essential resources to help with care giving. “Caregivers are often overwhelmed and as part of this new education effort called Ask Medicare will be a single, go-to place for help and information,” said Kerry Weems, CMS acting administrator. “There is a genuine need for credible and easy to use information that provides answers to a wide range of questions toward helping beneficiaries make better use of Medicare. The Ask Medicare Web site was designed with family caregivers in mind.”

The CMS, part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), launched the new caregiver initiative through a live Webcast hosted by Acting Administrator Weems. During the live online forum, national partner organizations, including HHS’ Administration on Aging, AARP, and the National Alliance for Caregiving, joined CMS in answering questions from caregivers.

Information to Help You Care for Others

Most caregivers do not think of or identify themselves as caregivers; yet, so many of the resources available to them use that term. “If a person helping someone on Medicare does not relate to the term ‘caregiver,’ they may miss a lot of resources,” said Weems. Many family caregivers see their roles of providing help or service to someone they care about as simply “the right thing to do” because the person is a family member or a friend. Family caregivers provide help that includes:

- buying groceries;
- picking up prescriptions;
- taking someone to the doctor;
- helping an elderly parent navigate benefits and plan for the future;
- looking after someone with a disease or disability; or
- caring for a parent in their home.

The Ask Medicare Web site will provide links to key partner organizations that assist caregivers and beneficiaries, and present personal stories from caregivers in the community. Support information and tools to help caregivers address common problems will also be available. As part of the initiative, CMS will launch an e-newsletter for caregivers that will deliver information into subscribers’ email boxes.

“Through Ask Medicare and the new e-newsletter, CMS will help provide more information to caregivers, helping to streamline caring for Medicare beneficiaries and ultimately improve their quality of life and that of their loved ones,” said Weems.

For more information about Medicare’s new caregiver initiative, please visit:

www.medicare.gov/caregivers.