

News Column for Use Week of March 18, 2024
Monica Thayer, Family Resource Management Extension Agent
River Valley Extension District
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Medicare Open Enrollment Results

Every year, Medicare beneficiaries have the opportunity to check their Part D prescription drug coverage during Medicare Open Enrollment, which spans October 15th through December 7th. This can be a challenging task to compare premiums, deductibles, copayments, and drug coverages, but there is free, confidential, and unbiased assistance available through the Senior Health Insurance Counseling for Kansas (SHICK) program.

SHICK is a free program offering Kansans an opportunity to talk with trained volunteers about Medicare. SHICK has counselors throughout the state who can assist people to stay informed on changing conditions in health care insurance and to cut through the confusion. SHICK counselors do not work for any insurance company as our goal is to educate and assist the public to make informed decisions on what is best for them.

Two Extension Agents and six community volunteers are trained SHICK Counselors through the River Valley District. There may be additional community partners and volunteers in your county certified through SHICK, but they do not volunteer through our Extension District.

During Open Enrollment in Fall 2023, the 8 SHICK Counselors associated with our Extension District met with 560 Medicare beneficiaries throughout Clay, Cloud, Republic, and Washington Counties. We assisted 270 Medicare beneficiaries with enrolling into different Part D Prescription Drug Plans for an estimated overall cost savings of \$445,939.68 for 2024. This is an average annual saving of \$1,651.63 per person changing plans. As you can see, it can be a huge financial benefit for Medicare beneficiaries to check their Part D Prescription Drug Plan each fall during Open Enrollment.

We want to take this opportunity to thank our community SHICK volunteers who assist with Open Enrollment. A huge thank you to Deanna Turner, Janet Elliott, Wann Sharp, Aimee Sharp, Bev Lang, and Sonya Garwood. We would not be able to make such a large impact without your willingness to serve others. Thank you so much for your dedication to the SHICK program.

If you have any questions regarding Medicare or are interested in learning more about SHICK, please reach out to Monica Thayer (mthayer@ksu.edu) at 785-527-5084 or Jordan Schuette (jschuette@ksu.edu) at 785-325-2121.

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