



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statewide Health Insurance Benefit Advisors (SHIBA)  
Aging & Long Term Care of Eastern Washington  
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## Medicare Open Enrollment Starts Oct 15<sup>th</sup>

Spokane, Washington – For more than 1.3 million Medicare beneficiaries in Washington state, this is an important time of year. Medicare’s Open Enrollment Period – also called the Annual Election Period – runs each year from October 15<sup>th</sup> to December 7<sup>th</sup>.

During this time, those on Medicare:

- Can switch from Original Medicare to a Medicare Advantage plan – and vice versa.
- With Original Medicare can join, drop, or switch a Part D prescription drug plan.
- With a Medicare Advantage plan can switch to a different Medicare Advantage plan.

The Statewide Health Insurance Benefits Advisors (SHIBA) program is ready to help with these decisions. SHIBA is a free, unbiased, and confidential service of the Washington State Office of the Insurance Commissioner. Our well-trained volunteers counsel people of all ages, adults living with disabilities, and people getting ready to retire about their Medicare choices.

SHIBA can help you understand your Medicare rights and options. Volunteers assist people through one-on-one counseling or group presentations. We answer your Medicare questions, make referrals, and help evaluate and compare health insurance policies.

Medicare is not a one-size fits all program. Each person’s needs, situation and benefits are different – and that includes spouses who may have their own unique Medicare plan.

Before you make a final decision, consider these tips:

- Plan costs and coverage can change every year, so review and keep all letters and notices your current plan sends you.
- List all the current prescription drugs you take, the doses, and how often. Then, use the Plan Finder at [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) to compare Part D plans.
- Review the Medicare & You handbook. You should receive it by mid-October.
- If you have questions, call SHIBA at 1-800-562-6900 before you sign up.
- Call your local SHIBA office at: 509-625-4801 SHIBA volunteers will be available for phone counseling, Monday through Friday.

**About Aging & Long Term Care of Eastern Washington:** Aging & Long Term Care of Eastern WA (ALTCEW) is the SHIBA sponsor for Spokane and Whitman Counties in partnership with the Washington State Office of the Insurance Commissioner. ALTCEW is a social service agency that supports the well-being of older adults, adults living with disabilities, and their care partners. The goal is to help individuals to remain independent and in their homes in the community as they age. ALTCEW is the local Area Agency on Aging for Ferry, Stevens, Pend Oreille, Spokane, and Whitman Counties.

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