

# Medicare's annual open enrollment period starts Oct. 15

For the 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 Oct. 15 to Dec. 7. 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 – part of the Office of the Insurance Commissioner - is ready to help with all of these decisions.

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. So 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 of 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 hand book. You should receive it by mid-October.
- If you have questions, call SHIBA at 1-800-562-6900 before you sign up.
- Attend a SHIBA workshop (check out our online events calendar at [www.insurance.wa.gov/shiba](http://www.insurance.wa.gov/shiba)).



## Need help with Medicare?

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- Call our Insurance Consumer Hotline at 1-800-562-6900 and ask to speak with a SHIBA volunteer in your local area.
- Call your local SHIBA office at: 509-625-4801.