



News Release

SOCIAL SECURITY

More Than Three Million People Apply for Medicare Prescription Drug Help

Jo Anne Barnhart, Commissioner of Social Security, announced today that more than three million people have applied for the extra help available with Medicare prescription drug costs. The extra help will pay most of the costs of monthly premiums, annual deductibles and prescription co-payments - an average of \$2,100 in extra help per year.

“I am extremely pleased with the results so far,” Commissioner Barnhart said. “But our work is far from over. We are continuing our outreach activities in cities all across the U.S. and we continue to work closely with federal, state and local agencies and groups to let all those who may be eligible know about the help that is available.”

In May of this year, Social Security began mailing nearly 19 million applications to potentially eligible Medicare beneficiaries. Applications were mailed over a 12 week period that began in late May and continued through mid August 2005. In July, a new Internet application located at www.socialsecurity.gov was unveiled allowing people to apply online for help with Medicare prescription drug plan costs. More than 1,000 people a day are now applying over the Internet.

“Our online application for Medicare prescription drug help just received one of the highest scores ever given to a public or private sector organization by the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI),” noted Commissioner Barnhart. The ACSI tracks trends in customer satisfaction and provides valuable benchmarking insights for companies and government agencies. “The positive responses to both our online application and to the mail-out applications are the result of our commitment to making the application simple and easy to understand.”

Social Security is now in the process of making follow-up contacts with those who have not yet responded to the initial mailing. Social Security’s on-the-ground outreach efforts with community based organizations, advocacy groups and State entities are also continuing. To date, more than 40,000 Medicare outreach events have been held.

“Our goal is to ensure that all those who are eligible for help with Medicare prescription drug costs have the opportunity to apply,” Commissioner Barnhart said. “I encourage all those on Medicare, their families and interested community groups to educate themselves about the Medicare prescription drug program and the help that is available. Together, we can make sure no one has to make the difficult choice of spending their limited income on prescription drugs or other basic needs.”

NOTE TO CORRESPONDENTS: A [fact sheet](#) about the help available to pay the costs of Medicare’s new prescription drug plan is attached. More detailed information about the new Medicare prescription drug coverage is available at www.Medicare.gov.