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MEMORANDUM

TO: AAA Directors **Notice #: 091905-1-T-LA**

FROM: Carole Green, Secretary

DATE: September 14, 2005

SUBJECT: Notice of Transmittal: Medicare Part D Outreach

The purpose of this notice is to seek your continued and increased support to the Department of Elder Affairs' SHINE program in their efforts to educate and counsel Medicare beneficiaries about the new Medicare prescription drug coverage. This new benefit is available to all people with Medicare, no matter how they get their healthcare now. The most vulnerable will receive extra help, so they will pay little or nothing out of their own pockets. Outreach efforts have already begun. The enrollment period for the drug benefit commences November 15, 2005, through May 15, 2006.

Through a network of 430-plus volunteers, SHINE seeks to provide education, information and assistance in every county of our state. Through our combined efforts, we must seek the hard-to-reach populations through group and individual counseling. With over three million Medicare beneficiaries in Florida, we expect many questions will be asked.

SHINE must continue to focus on outreach efforts in order to meet requirements of the CMS grant award to the department and our subsequent contracts with each area agency on aging, and most importantly, to best serve Florida's elders. Your success in achieving the outputs listed in each contract is dependant upon support from all elements of AAA management. Successful outreach and enrollment assistance to seniors is best assured through the establishment of productive counseling sites, senior health fairs, publicity, partnership with local lead agencies and partnerships with other community resources. Affiliation with faith-based and community-based local organizations is key to reaching seniors.

Of course, our loyal SHINE counselors cannot be the only source of information. Executive directors can assist by evaluating the local SHINE work plans to assure good organizational support is provided, as well as by providing leadership in the area of volunteer recruitment and the formation of partnerships with community-based organizations. Additionally, SHINE liaisons may need extra help during this period of high activity to ensure the steady and seamless flow of inquiries through the Elder Helpline to SHINE counselors and other trained community partners. Each AAA may create a plan to address the expected volume of inquiries from seniors, their caregivers and others. Staff in your local lead agencies and other area

<http://elderaffairs.state.fl.us>

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To assure the quality and accuracy of the information provided on the new Medicare benefit, SHINE has supported the education of our partners on the important elements of the Medicare prescription drug coverage since last February, and continually thereafter. SHINE liaisons, area coordinators and other trained presenters will continue to offer instruction throughout the state. Additionally, SHINE headquarters' staff members are available to provide technical support in the upcoming weeks. This will include a major statewide training event in Orlando in September, followed by a series of more local events between late September and November in every PSA. We encourage the professional staff at the AAAs and the lead agencies to become knowledgeable in Part D details. This can be done by their investigation of the CMS www.cms.hhs.gov and SSA www.ssa.gov Web sites, by involvement in CMS-sponsored conference calls, and by participation in local presentations the Medicare prescription drug benefit, Part D.

In summary, we realize the importance of this historic effort to educate seniors as they make individual decisions about Medicare prescription drug coverage. We are asking our SHINE counselors to do more complex work with higher expectations and consequences to beneficiaries. Your enthusiastic and coordinated professional staff support, both in the AAA and through your local networks, will assure our success and help us to accomplish our mission.