

In 2006, Medicare beneficiaries who were eligible for Medicaid also (call “dual eligible” beneficiaries) were enrolled in Medicare drug benefits. Some of these individuals lost their Medicaid eligibility at some point in 2006 and therefore did *not automatically remain enrolled in a Medicare drug benefit for 2007*. If you know some of these individuals who are without a Medicare drug plan or who are in a plan that doesn’t cover their medications well – please read below to see how you can help.

NCRx – North Carolina’s new program to help seniors with incomes at or below 175% of the federal poverty level pay their Medicare Part D monthly premiums, **has EXTENDED its enrollment period**. In fact, as of now, there is no deadline for applications.

Special Enrollment Periods: CMS has recently announced several important opportunities for Medicare beneficiaries to enroll or switch enrollment in a Medicare-approved drug plan. These are additional opportunities to enroll or switch Medicare-approved drug plans outside of the normal open enrollment period, which is from November 15th to December 31st.

1. During the 2007 plan year, **all LIS Medicare beneficiaries** (those with the low-income subsidy or “extra help” from Social Security) have one new opportunity to enroll or switch plans. “Dual eligibles” (have Medicare and Medicaid benefits) can switch every month – if need be.
2. Also, one major advantage for seniors enrolled in **NCRx** is that this program is a **qualified SPAP** (state pharmacy assistance program). Thus, enrollees receive one additional opportunity to enroll in Medicare-approved drug plans or switch plans during the plan year.

Bottom line is that **many Medicare beneficiaries can still enroll or switch drug plans outside of open enrollment by invoking their SEP** (special enrollment period). Please refer your patients to the local or state SHIIP office (Seniors’ Health Insurance Information Program – 1-800-443-9354) or to other local agencies designed to provide hands on help to Medicare beneficiaries.