

Increasing participation in the Medicare savings programs and the low-income drug subsidy

ISSUE: Although programs like the Medicare savings programs and the low-income drug subsidy provide significant financial benefits to beneficiaries with limited incomes, the majority of eligible beneficiaries do not participate. Why is the participation rate for these programs low? What strategies can be used to increase outreach to eligible beneficiaries?

KEY POINTS: Since the Medicare savings program began in 1989, there have been a number of campaigns to increase public awareness of these programs, simplify the application process, and provide assistance to individuals seeking to apply but they have had limited success. There are many reasons why individuals might choose not to take advantage of these programs but researchers have found that the main barriers to enrollment are beneficiary lack of awareness of the programs and the difficulty of the application processes. Some states are currently experimenting with strategies to increase enrollment in both the Medicare savings programs and the low-income drug subsidy.

For this presentation, we will discuss some of the reasons for low enrollment in these programs. We will present draft recommendations for increasing program participation.

ACTION: Commissioners should discuss draft recommendations for increasing participation.

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