



## NEWS RELEASE

---

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
November 15, 2006

CONTACT:  
Marisol Morales  
202-965-9633  
Marisol.morales@nlhn.net

### **Call to Action: Hispanics Mobilize on Medicare Drug Coverage**

The National Latina Health Network is joining with other major Hispanic national organizations to ensure that all Hispanic seniors get the information they need to make Medicare drug coverage decisions when open enrollment begins on November 15. Medicare prescription drug coverage outreach is part of Medicare's ongoing focus on increasing Hispanic utilization of the drug coverage, flu vaccinations and other preventive services and benefits now available to all people with Medicare.

"An estimated 3.1 million Hispanics age 65 and older are eligible for drug coverage, yet to date some have failed to sign up — even though Medicare drug coverage could significantly reduce their health-care expenses, especially since many Hispanic seniors qualify for extra help," said Elena Alvarado, NLHN President. "Hispanic seniors who join are saving an average of more than \$1,100 a year with Medicare drug coverage."

When open enrollment begins on November 15, people are encouraged to review their drug coverage options to make sure they have coverage that meets their needs in 2007. Even Hispanic seniors who already have Medicare prescription drug coverage may want to review their plan and any changes to it and make sure they're satisfied with the plan's cost, coverage and customer service.

People who are going to make a change should enroll in a new plan by December 8 to help ensure they will be able to fill prescriptions smoothly in early January. People who want to stay with their current coverage don't need to take any further action.

Members of the Hispanic health, civic, CBO, nonprofit, and faith communities are mobilizing to help all Hispanic seniors get the information they need to make informed choices about their Medicare drug coverage options.

"Choosing the right plan can be a challenge for many seniors, especially those who are limited English speaking and we do not want any Hispanic senior to miss out on savings because they did not know about the help available in their communities," said Alvarado.

-more-

A number of national organizations are also increasing their outreach efforts to provide one-on-one assistance to Hispanics during the six-week open enrollment period.

Medicare prescription drug coverage is just one part of Medicare's ongoing emphasis on prevention and early detection. Medicare beneficiaries now have access to an increasingly broad set of preventive benefits, including cardiovascular screenings; tests for breast, cervical, vaginal, colorectal, and prostate cancers; flu shots and bone mass measurements.

Of special interest in the coming months is Medicare's coverage of the influenza immunization, or "flu shot." Influenza and its complications result in over 200,000 hospitalizations and 36,000 deaths each year, most in people 65 years of age and over. The best way to prevent the flu is to get vaccinated each year during the fall season. Unfortunately, elderly Hispanics are traditionally less than half as likely as Non-Hispanics to take advantage of the flu shot and other preventive services, making outreach to Hispanic communities particularly important.

People can get more Spanish-language information about Medicare prescription drug coverage, the flu shot and other preventive benefits by calling 1-800 MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227), visiting their local State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) office for free personalized counseling, or attending one of the thousands of local enrollment events taking place across the country from now through December.

To learn more about the work of the Hispanic organizations assisting in enrollment and outreach efforts, please visit the following website: [www.nlhn.net](http://www.nlhn.net)

###