



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS

M. JODI RELL
GOVERNOR

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Governor Rell Praises State's Health Insurance Counseling Service for Elders

'CHOICES' Program Gains 3rd-in-Nation Status for Helping Older Adults with Medicare, Other Health Insurance Options

Governor M. Jodi Rell today announced that Connecticut's 'CHOICES' health insurance counseling program for seniors has been recognized by the federal government as one of the top three services of its kind in the nation.

"CHOICES is an absolutely vital service for seniors trying to navigate the complicated and confusing world of health care coverage," Governor Rell said. "We have a corps of dedicated staff and volunteers statewide who keep up with the latest information and directly counsel elders and their adult children about their options. I am extremely proud that Connecticut's program has been cited by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to be the third-best nationally."

CHOICES served a record 62,166 beneficiaries on Medicare and Medicaid related topics during fiscal 2010, the largest number in the program's history.

The service is available by calling 1-800-994-9422 or visiting www.ct.gov/agingservices and clicking on the CHOICES icon.

"The CHOICES program is an outstanding resource because it gives information and preliminary screening for more than 20 federal and state benefit programs," said Social Services Commissioner Michael P. Starkowski. "CHOICES counselors help elders make important decisions about their health care and how to access the best coverage for their individual needs."

CHOICES -- which stands for **C**onnecticut's program for **H**ealth insurance assistance, **O**utreach, **I**nformation and referral, **C**ounseling, and **E**ligibility Screening -- helps residents aged 60 and older and adults with disabilities with Medicare (including the Part D prescription drug assistance benefit), Medicaid and other health coverage programs.

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The service also provides information and referral on a host of other subjects, including adult day care, respite care, housing, nutrition assistance, home care, nursing facility care, and transportation.

“We are deeply grateful for the tireless dedication of each and every CHOICES counselor,” said Jennifer Throwe, state CHOICES coordinator at the Department of Social Services. “These caring volunteers assist others in navigating a myriad of complex health insurance and care options so they can make informed decisions about their coverage, cost and care.”

A cooperative program of Department of Social Services, the five Area Agencies on Aging and the Center for Medicare Advocacy, CHOICES relies on 12 federally-funded staff and a trained, certified pool of 350 volunteer counselors to provide information and referral on a broad range of topics.

The high federal ranking by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services comes with a small performance award, which will be given to the Centers for Medicare Advocacy as the primary trainers for CHOICES, hosting a CHOICES statewide meeting, and to the Area Agencies on Aging for their work in the program.

DSS’s satellite-linked ‘Rx-Xpress’ bus serves as an additional resource for information, counseling and eligibility determination, visiting locations such as senior centers, libraries and farmers’ markets. The Rx Express bus is able to provide on-site Medicare eligibility screening for benefits to older adults and people with disabilities in rural, urban and suburban communities throughout Connecticut.