

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES  
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services  
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**Office of External Affairs**

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## **MEDICARE NEWS**

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### **MANAGED CARE PLAN EXPANDS TO INCLUDE MEDICARE BENEFICIARIES IN WASHINGTON, D.C.**

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has approved a request by Elder Health to expand managed care coverage to Medicare beneficiaries in Washington, D.C.

Elder Health, based in Baltimore, Maryland, will begin serving beneficiaries on Feb. 1 in the District of Columbia. Medicare beneficiaries can sign up for the plan during the current open enrollment for Medicare Advantage, formerly known as Medicare+Choice. About 79,000 beneficiaries live in the District.

"We are pleased Elder Health decided to expand this health plan to include Medicare beneficiaries in the District of Columbia," HHS Secretary Tommy G. Thompson said. "Under the Medicare reform law signed by President Bush, Medicare will provide all seniors - no matter where they live - with better health insurance options, including prescription drug coverage and preventive care. The law is achieving the President's goals of strengthening and modernizing Medicare."

Elder Health began serving Medicare beneficiaries in 2001 as a Medicare HMO. Its current service area in the Baltimore-D.C. metro area includes Baltimore City and the Maryland counties of Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Harford, Howard, Montgomery and Prince George's.

The plan gives another health care choice to beneficiaries in the District. The other Medicare Advantage plan currently operating in the District is Kaiser Health Plan of the Mid-Atlantic.

"We want to make sure all Medicare beneficiaries, whether in a Medicare Advantage plan or fee-for-service, are receiving the highest quality health care," said CMS Administrator Mark McClellan, M.D., Ph.D. "We are doing more to guarantee that beneficiaries understand the Medicare coverage options available to them. We also are

reminding beneficiaries of the need to work closely with the doctors and other health care providers that give them medical care."

Since December 8, 2003, when President Bush signed the Medicare Modernization Act into law, CMS has approved 41 new contracts with Medicare health plans and 56 service area expansions. There are currently 32 applications pending for new contracts and 24 service area expansions pending.

Medicare Advantage HMOs and fee-for-service plans are available where private companies choose to offer them. Currently, about 4.6 million Medicare beneficiaries -- out of a total of about 40 million aged and disabled Americans -- have enrolled in Medicare HMOs. Original fee-for-service Medicare, currently chosen by more than 35 million beneficiaries, is available to all beneficiaries.

Medicare has a far-reaching consumer information program that includes a national toll-free phone number -- 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) or TTY/TDD, at 877-486-2048 -- an Internet site -- [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) -- and a coalition of more than 200 national and local organizations to provide seniors more information.

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