

Elder News

Governor's Office of Elderly Affairs "Serving Seniors Successfully"

**Winter 2014
Volume 11, Issue 1**



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Older Americans Month Theme 2014 Announced

Each May, the nation celebrates Older Americans Month to recognize older Americans for their contributions and provide them with information to help them stay healthy and active. This year, ACL is focusing on injury prevention with the theme

Safe Today. Healthy Tomorrow.

Social Security Administration Update

Beginning **August 2014**, Social Security Administration will no longer issue Social Security number printouts in the field offices. Individuals who need proof of their Social Security number and cannot find their card, will need to apply for a replacement card. In addition, beginning **October 2014**, **Social Security Administration** field offices will stop providing benefit verification letters, except in emergency situations. Benefit verifications are available online, and can be obtained anytime by registering for a *my Social Security* account located at: www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount, or requested through our national toll-free number: 1(800)772-1213.



SNAP Update

Effective November 1, 2013 there was a reduction of SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) formerly known as Food Stamp Benefits. The average single-person household will see a decrease of about \$11 per month. This can be a significant amount for our elderly. To confuse further, the annual cost-of-living adjustments increased most benefits in October and then the reduction in November. We can assist our constituents in helping our SNAP eligible seniors in possibly increasing their SNAP benefits by spreading the word about the Medical Expense Deductions and Shelter Deductions.

- **Medical Expense Deduction:** Older adults or individuals with disabilities can claim out-of-pocket expenses that are over \$35 per month. This includes premiums, medical equipment, dentures, hearing aids, prosthetics, service dog fees and expenses, transportation, lodging costs (including mileage at 56.5 cents per mile), attendant, homemaker, over-the-counter medication and prescription medication
- **Shelter Expense Deduction:** Clients can deduct certain household costs such as rent/mortgage and utilities.

For more information about the SNAP program and assistance, please contact your local Department of Children and Family Services or visit the website at www.dss.louisiana.gov.



Lana has scheduled the fall LANA Conference for October 14-16, 2014 at the Hilton Garden Inn in West Monroe, LA. The LANA Conference Committee is requesting topic suggestions and are calling for presentations. Please e-mail President Mike Rome with any topic suggestions and/or presentation requests to mvcoa@att.net.



Health Insurance and the Marketplace TIPS

Q: Can a consumer make a payment through the Marketplace?

A: No. The marketplace does not accept payments directly.

Q: May consumers age 65+ who are not eligible for Medicare, including legally present immigrants, obtain coverage through the Marketplace and receive premium tax credits?

A: Yes.

Q: Does an applicant have to have an email account to apply for coverage through the Marketplace?

A: Yes. To apply through the Marketplace online, an email account is required.

Q: If a consumer gets a mailed eligibility notice, how can we make sure it is not fraudulent?

A: The eligibility letter that is mailed to the consumer will be on distinctive Health Insurance Marketplace letterhead. In addition, there will be two pages that have information about how to get assistance in several different languages; and the last page of the letter will have a barcode on it.

Q: How can I help a consumer who submitted a paper application, but hasn't heard back from CMS?

A: Call the Call Center (1-800-318-2596). The call center can see if the consumer has an eligibility determination and can provide them with their application ID number. With the ID number, the consumer can go to Healthcare.gov and create an account to retrieve the eligibility determination and view plan options, select a plan and enroll.

NOTE: The Enrollment period for those who do not have health care ends **March 31, 2014**. For more information, go to www.healthcare.gov to sign up online or call 1-800-318-2596 for more information.

What is Calcium?

By Anita Thibodeaux, LDN, RD



Calcium is needed by the body to maintain strong bones and teeth, for nerves to carry messages to the brain and body, for muscles to move and for blood vessels to carry blood through the body. Calcium is found in the Dairy products such as milk, yogurt, cheeses, sardines, dark leafy greens (Spinach, turnip and collard greens) and eggs.



The 5th Annual LEADER Summit: Let's Get Cooking with Person-Centered Care theme is scheduled for March 26-27, 2014 at the Paragon Casino & Resort, 711 Paragon Place, Marksville, LA. This summit is a unique opportunity to learn more about culture change and person-centered care throughout the long-term care continuum. The event will host 12 concurrent sessions specifically designed to interest and educate residents, family members, social workers, ombudsmen and other care managers at senior centers, nursing homes, assisted living facilities and retirement communities. For more information, go to www.LaLeader.org or call 225-933-1309.



Seniors Must Understand Costs When Buying Medical Equipment

Information provided by Louisiana Senior Medicare Patrol

Beneficiaries calling 800-Medicare to report problems with providers continue to have complaints regarding Durable Medical Equipment (DME). Jefferson, Calcasieu, East Baton Rouge, Caddo and Lafayette Parishes recorded the most complaints, but across the state, problems with DME suppliers rank at the top of the list. Many of the problems are directly connected to billing or service issues. The best way to avoid billing problems is to make sure you get all the information before you buy. A good example is the complaint of Mrs. Harry Smith.* Mrs. Smith purchased a pair of diabetic shoes from a local durable medical equipment supplier. The shoes were of poor quality and did not last very long.

SMP Continued...

When Mrs. Smith returned to the supplier's place of business to ask for a new pair of shoes, the business had shut down. Mrs. Smith went to another DME supplier. She told them she needed some diabetic shoes. She did not think to tell the new supplier that she had recently bought some shoes that wore out. She did not know that Medicare will only pay for one pair of diabetic shoes each year. Mrs. Smith received her new shoes. The DME supplier submitted a claim for the shoes to Medicare. Medicare did not pay for the shoes, because they had already paid for one pair for Mrs. Smith. The DME supplier sent Mrs. Smith a bill for over \$400. Mrs. Smith did not have the money to pay the bill. Not knowing what else to do, she ignored the bill for a very long time. She is now getting threatening phone calls from debt collectors. Here's what Mrs. Smith should have done.

1. Told the new DME supplier that she had already gotten one pair of shoes. The DME supplier could have charged Medicare for replacement shoes and Medicare may have paid for the claim
2. Called the DME supplier as soon as she got the bill. She might have been able to file an appeal and get Medicare to pay for the shoes
3. Asked the DME supplier before buying the shoes if she could be responsible for any of the costs and how much those costs might be

Buying durable medical equipment can be complicated. Make sure you understand what the equipment might cost you before you buy it. Also, make sure your supplier has all the facts so they can assist you in making good financial decisions. For help with bills you receive for equipment you did not get or have returned, call Louisiana Senior Medicare Patrol at 877-272-8720. * Name Change

GOEA Training 2014



The GOEA Training 2014 at the Country Inn and Suites in Pineville, Louisiana was held on February 5-6, 2014. Representatives from Councils on Aging and Area Agencies on Aging participated in workshops on Budgeting, Area



Plan, Service Procurement, Service Taxonomy, Senior Centers and Legal Services. If you would like additional information or technical assistance, please contact GOEA at 225-342-7100.

Northwest Louisiana Elder Law Boot Camp

By: Jane Thomas, GOEA Legal Service Developer



Although freezing temperatures kept some seniors away, on *Thursday, January 23, 2014*, more than 400 seniors, caregivers, and professionals attended the **Northwest Louisiana Elder Law Boot Camp** at the Riverview Hall, 600

Clyde Fant Parkway in Shreveport. The program began at 9:00 a.m. with legal education on topics **Community property, Usufruct, and Wills; Powers of attorney for property and health care; Social Security benefits; VA Aid & Attendance and Medicaid; and ended with Credit**

Freeze, Annual Reports, and Reverse Mortgages at 1:00 p.m. Attorneys with the Shreveport Pro Bono Project and Legal Services of North Louisiana simplified the complex elder law issues and answered all questions. The NW LA Elder Law Boot Camp was hosted by the Statewide Elder Law Task Force, the Governor's Office of Elderly Affairs, and the Bossier and Caddo Councils on Aging, who provided lunch for everyone. The audience was treated to invaluable legal education on all topics and left with lawhelp.org/la and goea.la.gov/ websites for further study on elder law issues.

A **Spotlight** on our Aging Network

The **Ascension Council on Aging** hosted a Driver Safety Course on January 22, 2014, the Ascension Council on Aging partnered with AARP to host a 4 hour Driver Safety course. For more information about activities and events hosted by the Ascension Council on Aging, call 225-473-3789.

The **Caldwell Council on Aging** has partnered with the District Attorney Mark McKee to host a monthly "Big Bucks" bingo. Prizes are awarded with a special Black Out Prize of \$10. This event is held every 3rd Wednesday of each month. For more information, please call the Caldwell Council on Aging at 318-649-2584.



The **Cameron Council on Aging** hosted a Valentine/Mardi Gras Party at the Grand Lake Fireman's Center on February 14, 2014. Music, Food, Fun and Fellowship was had by all. For information on upcoming events, contact the Council on Aging at 337-905-6000.



Capital Area Agency on Aging has a new program "**Kibbles to Geaux**" program to assist seniors who have pets but cannot afford



to buy pet food. Instead of the senior sharing their meal with their pet, the Capital Area Agency on Aging will purchase pet food to be delivered to the senior pet owner in addition to the senior's home delivered meal. For more information about this program, please call Capital Area Agency on Aging at 225-922-2525 or 1-800-833-9883.

Three senior participants with the **New Orleans Council on Aging** were awarded high quality hearing aids on February 15, 2014 at the Mariott Hotel. The awardees were Ms. Yvonne Johnson, Ms. Charlotte Swain and Ms. Louise Hebert. Special Thanks to Arnie Fielkow, Mr. Rob Bennett



and Mr. Ed Keller for being instrumental in getting the hearing aids donated to the seniors. The awards breakfast was sponsored by the NBA Retired Players Association.



The **Tangipahoa Voluntary Council on Aging** hosted a "Thompsons Christmas Shopping Spree" for the Hammond and Ponchatoula Senior Center participants. Ms. Martha Thompson, TVCOA Board Member, enlisted the help of Ponchatoula High School, Hammond Kiwanis Club, Mayor Mayson Foster and the Mormon Church to provide gifts for the seniors to purchase. Each participant was given a \$20 voucher to purchase donated items as gifts for their family members. For more information about this activity, please contact the Council on Aging at 985-748-7486.

Congratulations!

The **Evangeline Council on Aging** celebrated 42 years of service to the elderly of Evangeline Parish at the 42 year celebration, Representative Bernard LeBas congratulated employees of the Evangeline Council on Aging who had more than 10 years of service to the seniors of Evangeline Parish. The awards were as follows:



- 10 years of service:** Bert Brewer, Geneva Williams, Sybil Landreneau, Roberta LaFleur, Rita Dardeau, Janice Fontenot and John Fontenot
- 20 year of service:** Shirley Vidrine
- 40 years of service:** Ms. Geneva Williams



The **Webster Council on Aging** celebrates moving into their new building facility in early February. A grand opening ceremony is forthcoming.

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