



**NEW MEXICO
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENTS**

Bill Richardson
Governor

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Beneficiaries Unfairly Disqualified from Medicare Prescription Discount Program

The NM Aging and Long-Term Services' benefits counseling program has received several calls from seniors who have been disqualified from their newly issued Medicare discount card coverage, apparently because of a false assumption made by the federal agency that oversees the program.

Calls about disqualifications also have been received by the Human Services Department's Medical Assistance Division, which manages Medicaid for the state.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), which oversees the Medicare program, has assumed that New Mexico Medicare beneficiaries are receiving prescription drug coverage if they qualify for more limited Medicaid programs.

Beneficiaries receiving prescription drug coverage through Medicaid are not allowed to receive assistance through the new Medicare prescription drug discount cards.

But in New Mexico, the limited Medicaid programs - called QMB, SLMB and QI - do not cover prescription drugs. These programs, available to people with low incomes who earn too much to qualify for full Medicaid coverage, pay only for Medicare premiums and co-pays.

Beneficiaries who get QMB, SLMB and QI qualify for the discount card and would likely qualify for the \$600-a-year assistance offered through Medicare.

"It's continuing to look as if the system is designed to deny seniors and people with disabilities access to the very benefits they need," Aging and Long-Term Services Secretary Michelle Lujan Grisham said.

(more)

(Disqualify – 2)

The Human Services Department recommends that people who are filling out a Medicare discount card application and receive QMB, SLMB or QI should note in the "comments" section that they receive these benefits but are not receiving pharmacy benefits. They can also go to their Income Support Division office and request a Client Request for Benefit Verification form (ISD form 003).

If beneficiaries have been disqualified, they can file an appeal by writing a letter stating the problem or denial of benefits and providing a written copy of the denial and a written copy showing the benefits provided by Medicaid.

Appeals should be sent to CMS, 1301 Young Street, Room 833, Dallas, TX 75202.

People who have been disqualified from receiving the prescription drug discount are encouraged to call the Aging and Long-Term Services Department at 800-432-2080 for assistance in filing an appeal.