

## January is National Glaucoma Awareness Month

Medicare provides coverage of an annual glaucoma screening for beneficiaries in at least one of the following high risk groups: Individuals with diabetes mellitus; individuals with a family history of glaucoma; African-Americans age 50 and older; and Hispanic-Americans age 65 and older. Check out [Medicare.gov](http://Medicare.gov) for more information.

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## MIPPA Changes Effective January 2010

The Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008 (MIPPA) included many changes that became effective this year. In addition to increasing the asset test for the Medicare Savings Programs (QMB, SLMB and QI) to \$6,600 for an individual and \$9,910 for a couple, cost sharing for Medicare approved psychiatric services has also changed. Effective January 1, 2010 Medicare coverage of psychiatric services increases from 50% to 55%. Check out the Health Assistance Partnership's [fact sheet](#) on MIPPA changes for 2010.

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## HHS provides additional funding for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced the release of \$1.2 billion to states to help low income citizens in the coming weeks with their heating bills. LIHEAP helps eligible families pay the costs of heating and insulating their homes in the winter, and cooling their homes in summer. Individuals can call 1-800-674-6327 for information about LIHEAP and where to apply, or visit the [LIHEAP](#) website.

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## Now Available on Epocrates, Medicare Part D formularies for 2010

Since Medicare Part D was launched in 2001, Epocrates has partnered with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to provide healthcare professionals with free mobile and online access to all Medicare Part D drug formularies. Access the latest Part D formulary information via [Epocrates' drug database](#).

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## You're the Counselor:

Robert was eligible for Medicare November 1, 2009 and signed up for Parts A and B, however he never picked up a drug plan. He wants to enroll in a Medicare Advantage, can he do this???

*(Send your ideas to [ask-hicap@inlandagency.org](mailto:ask-hicap@inlandagency.org) and we will share your counseling tips in the next issue)*

## Counseling Tips for Frances (1/8/2010):

Richard recommends, since we are at the beginning of the year, taking advantage of Medicare's transition requirements, which says plans must provide the previously covered drug for up to 90 days. During this transition period, Frances can request an exception based on her medical necessity.

Bette suggests checking with her doctor to see if a generic equivalent is available and if she is a candidate for it. If she can't take an alternate medication, she can try an exception or see if the drug manufacturer has a patient assistance program (PAP) which can provide a significant savings to her.