

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
Center for Beneficiary Choices
7500 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, Maryland 21244-1850



DIVISION OF ENROLLMENT & ELIGIBILITY POLICY

DATE: March 8, 2006

TO: All Medicare Advantage Organizations, Prescription Drug Plans, Cost Plans, PACE Organizations and Demonstrations

FROM: Randy Brauer, Acting Director

SUBJECT: **Additional opportunities for individuals affected by Hurricane Katrina have to join and switch Medicare Plans, including Medicare prescription drug plans in 2006**

CMS will grant all Hurricane Katrina evacuees a special enrollment period (SEP) that gives them more time to change their Medicare prescription drug plans in 2006. Individuals will be considered "evacuees" and eligible for this SEP if they reside in certain zip codes as identified by the Federal Emergency Management Agency at the time of the hurricane (August 2005). Please refer to the attached spreadsheet of designated zip codes.

The special enrollment period means that Katrina evacuees will be able to switch plans, including Medicare prescription drug plans, at any time through Dec. 31, 2006. This special enrollment period allows Katrina evacuees to change regardless of a change in residence, such as if they have temporarily located, have moved back to their permanent home, or if there are other circumstances that require more time to choose or change plans.

To determine if individual is eligible for this SEP, Medicare plans must first attempt to obtain proof that the individual resided in an affected zip code (e.g., driver's license, utility bills, etc.). If the individual is unable to provide such proof, the plan must accept the beneficiary's attestation that he or she resided in an affected zip code.