



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **CareOregon to Provide New Medicare Drug Benefit**

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) announced today that it has awarded a contract to CareOregon to administer its new Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit (Part D) beginning January 1, 2006. The contract is part of a CMS-approved Medicare Advantage plan, which will allow CareOregon to provide the full range of Medicare benefits to people who qualify for both Medicare and the Oregon Health Plan (Medicaid).

CareOregon has participated in the Oregon Health Plan since 1994 and currently serves more than 100,000 Oregonians throughout the state. Through its new Medicare plan, CareOregon Advantage, it will offer Medicare services to eligible participants in Clackamas, Clatsop, Columbia, Marion, Multnomah, Polk, and Washington counties.

"CareOregon members eligible for both Medicare and Medicaid now will not only benefit from the new eagerly awaited drug benefit plan designed to reduce prescription costs; for the first time, they also will have their Medicare and Medicaid services coordinated through a single organization," said CareOregon CEO David E. Ford.

Approximately 6,000 current CareOregon members who also qualify for Medicare benefits will be automatically enrolled in CareOregon Advantage unless they choose an alternative program.

"This will be seamless for most of our members because in most cases they will continue using the same providers and pharmacies that they are using now," said Ford. "By coordinating these two programs, we will provide members with full access to a greater range of services and benefits, including an expanded formulary of prescription drugs."

Beginning October 1, 2005, CareOregon will launch the CareOregon Advantage site at <http://www.careoregonadvantage.org>.

According to a CMS release today, 20 organizations in Oregon will offer stand alone prescription drug plans, or Medicare users can get drug coverage with additional benefits and even lower total out-of-pocket costs by enrolling in one of the 11 Medicare Advantage plans in Oregon. Prescription drug coverage will be available to everyone in Medicare, regardless of their income or how they get their Medicare coverage, according to CMS. Extra assistance is available to those with limited incomes and resources.

All plans approved in Oregon have met Medicare's requirements for providing access to medically necessary drugs, including formulary standards and standards for access to convenient retail pharmacies and to drugs in nursing homes. All plans are required to provide coverage at least as good as Medicare's standard coverage.

"Thanks to the range of options available, everyone in Medicare who lives in Oregon will be able to choose a prescription drug plan that addresses their individual concerns about cost, coverage and convenience," Health and Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt said in a CMS release today.

## **About CareOregon**

CareOregon is a not-for-profit organization committed to improving and protecting the health of low income and vulnerable Oregonians. It is dedicated to providing access to high quality, cost-effective and culturally competent care for members, and to supporting the clinicians who care for them.