

Section 1115 Demonstrations: Wisconsin SeniorCare

Public Comments

Title	Description	Created At
<p>Wisconsin Aging Network Support for SeniorCare</p>	<p>Wisconsin Aging Network c/o Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources, Inc. 1414 MacArthur Road, Suite A Madison, WI 53714 November 8, 2012</p> <p>Center for Medicare/Medicaid Studies (CMS) Re: 1115 Waiver for SeniorCare Dear CMS:</p> <p>As a collective association of aging agencies, the Wisconsin Aging Network (WAN) offers this letter of support for the renewal of Wisconsin's Department of Health Services' (DHS) Section 1115 demonstration project, SeniorCare. Wisconsin's DHS has filed a revised waiver renewal application to continue this vital program lauding its easy application process, affordability, cost efficiencies, quality program administration, and not to mention--it helps to keep older people healthy and avoid institutionalization. If not reauthorized, SeniorCare is set to expire December 2012.</p> <p>SeniorCare, which began in 2002, provides out-patient prescription drug coverage for low-income Wisconsin citizens age 65 and older. To date, over 152,000 older adults--the vast majority of whom are elderly women-- have benefitted from this program.</p> <p>Wisconsin's SeniorCare is the only program of its kind in the United States which offers enrollees an alternative to Medicare Part D prescription drug coverage. SeniorCare requires only a one-page application, a \$30 annual membership fee, and is available to anyone over the age of 65 whose income is below 200% of the federal poverty level. It does not have an asset test. Co-payments are \$5 for generic drugs and \$15 for brand-name drugs. A person can enroll in the program year-round.</p> <p>In comparison, enrollment in Medicare Part D is open only one time a year. Typically, it takes an individual 1.5 hours and access to the Internet in deciding which one of over 40 insurance options might best fit their particular prescription drug needs based on their current medication requirements at the time of enrollment. Most seniors need professional assistance to complete the application. Part D annual premiums can vary from between \$180-\$1,308 and for many older adults its cost is not only unaffordable, but poses a barrier to continued access when one encounters the gap in coverage known as the infamous 'donut hole'.</p> <p>SeniorCare is a unique partnership between Wisconsin DHS, the federal government, and pharmaceutical companies. Wisconsin covers 25% of the costs; the federal government and drug companies contribute a combined 75%. According to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, SeniorCare's 2009 cost per enrollee was \$588, while Medicare Part D subsidy by the government was \$1,690.</p> <p>SeniorCare negotiates lower drug prices and saved \$50 million in 2009. Currently there is a significant surplus so it is a financially viable program.</p>	<p>2012-11-08 11:58</p>

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	<p>In Medicare Part D, the pharmacies set the drug prices with no negotiations for lower costs.</p> <p>Wisconsin's U.S. Senator Herb Kohl, a long-time advocate of aging programs and the needs of the elderly, has encouraged the federal government to continue its SeniorCare waiver beyond the December 2012 expiration date. We sincerely appreciate and support Senator Kohl's position on this issue.</p> <p>In 2011 hundreds of pages of 'Save SeniorCare' petitions were circulated in Wisconsin following passage of the state's Act 10 which would have curtailed this program. Thousands of signatures were collected by member-associations of WAN--the majority from SeniorCare members who wanted a say in ensuring this program continued. Several state legislators also distributed petitions to constituents and as a result collected over 14,000 additional signatures. Fortunately, because of this huge outcry by older adults, caregivers, advocates, and others, CMS stepped in and told the state it would not be allowed to break its contract with CMS for the administration of this waiver. The state's administration realized how important this program was for thousands of at-risk elderly and announced continuation of SeniorCare until December 2012. As demonstrated by its renewal application, the state has clearly outlined the benefit of this program for older persons statewide.</p> <p>We understand input provided by the public is not necessarily factored into decisions on such waivers, but nonetheless we strongly agree on and support the SeniorCare waiver renewal application. Many older adults are currently making decisions as to which drug coverage they will elect to participate in for 2013. We hope that CMS will agree that the only reasoned decision to make is approve the waiver and allow for older adults to continue on this program that has meant significant savings to them on their prescription drug costs.</p> <p>Sincerely, Robert Kellerman, Executive Director Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources, Inc.</p>	
Sam Wilson AARP Wisconsin	<p>Sam Wilson AARP Wisconsin 222 W. Washington Ave., #600 Madison, WI 53703 November 8, 2012 Center for Medicare/Medicaid Studies Re: 1115 Waiver for SeniorCare Dear CMS: AARP Wisconsin, with a membership of over 810,000 individuals across Wisconsin, welcomes the opportunity to comment on the 1115 Waiver application from the State of Wisconsin for the extension of the SeniorCare Program. AARP Wisconsin has been a supporter of this program from its inception and strongly endorses the Department of Health Services request for the extension of the waiver. SeniorCare is a sterling example of how providing consumer choice and freedom in the marketplace can serve multiple goals: the financial and health benefits of the individual as well as the broader public health</p>	2012-11-08 06:25

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	<p>policy goals of improving the health and welfare of older adults and ensuring proper utilization of services across the health care delivery spectrum. In this respect, Wisconsin is a leader in the nation and as is to be commended for its continued commitment to these critical goals.</p> <p>The position of AARP Wisconsin with regard to SeniorCare is very clear. We support the continuation of SeniorCare and we support Governor Walker's request for a waiver extension to continue the SeniorCare program. SeniorCare, born out of a necessity to alleviate the burdens of rising costs of food, medications, and other daily necessities, has retained its popularity and value to many seniors who continue to choose this program well after the implementation of Medicare Part D at the federal level. It is a convenience for some, a necessity for many, and a lifeline for even more. SeniorCare's innovative funding model that draws from many sources, including the participants themselves, has proven to be an effective way to manage the cost of the program even in the most difficult of fiscal environments. With all these variables in mind, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to ignore the great success that this program has achieved in the state.</p> <p>AARP Wisconsin's commitment to SeniorCare began at its inception, training volunteers to educate people about the benefit and to enroll them in the program. It continues to this day in our advocacy efforts as we continue to hear the personal stories of how SeniorCare has positively impacted the lives of our members and the general public across the state. Again, we appreciate the opportunity to share our support with you for this vital program for Wisconsin and encourage in the strongest terms possible an extension of the SeniorCare program.</p> <p>Sincerely, Sam Wilson, State Director AARP Wisconsin</p>	
Support for Renewal	10-25-12 I definitely am in favor of continuing Senior Care of WI. It is a tremendous help to people who are in the low-cost prescription program. I hope congress votes in favor of it.	2012-10-25 16:12
Support for Renewal	An extension of Senior Care prescription drug benefits for Wisconsin seniors is laudable. Senior Care is a viable program which provides access to life sustaining medications that are otherwise not affordable. My mother is a Senior Care member. Like most seniors, she simply can not afford the Medicare D donut hole. Moreover, it is my opinion, that Medicare D is cumbersome and extremely difficult for anyone to interpret, let alone seniors. My appreciation is extended to Senator Robert Wirch and all other advocates who have defended Senior Care in Wisconsin and preserved a true benefit for our seniors.	2012-10-22 14:04
We, the representatives of the SOS Senior Council, are writing to urge you to approve the application for renewal of the Wisconsin Senior Ca		2012-10-19 06:54

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Support for Renewal	<p>Since 2002, SeniorCare has helped hundreds of thousands of Wisconsin's seniors get the prescription drugs they need at a cost they can afford. In fact, SeniorCare offers more comprehensive coverage and is less expensive for consumers AND the government than Medicare Part D. As a result, SeniorCare is an immensely popular program that has been supported by members of both parties over the years.</p> <p>When a provision in Gov. Walker's 2011-13 budget proposal called for an end to the program as we know it, my colleagues and I collected more than 14,000 signatures to "Save SeniorCare"; 2,940 of those were my constituents. Together, we were successful in saving SeniorCare at that time. I write today on behalf of those 2,940 constituents who spoke up last year, as well as the thousands and thousands more from my district and all parts of the state who rely on SeniorCare, to ask for the continuation of this invaluable program as it is.</p> <p>State Senator Robert Wirch 22nd Senate District</p>	2012-10-17 10:24