

Lower Costs, Better Care for North Carolina Seniors: Medicare After The Affordable Care Act

The Affordable Care Act strengthens Medicare and helps 1.5 million seniors and people on Medicare in North Carolina take charge of their health. The law provides important benefits such as free preventive services, free annual wellness visits, a 50 percent discount on prescription drugs for Medicare recipients in the coverage gap known as the “donut hole,” and a phase-out of the donut hole altogether by 2020. Medicare is now more affordable, with lower premiums and cost sharing, and continues to offer enrollees a choice of a private Medicare Advantage plan. These benefits are already making a difference in the lives of seniors. The chart below highlights how seniors in North Carolina have seen their Medicare benefits improve in the last year.

	Benefits in 2010	Benefits in 2011
More Affordable Prescription Drugs	114,012 North Carolina residents on Medicare who hit the Medicare prescription drug donut hole received a tax-free \$250 rebate check. As a result, Medicare enrollees in North Carolina saved \$28.5 million.	All North Carolina residents on Medicare who hit the prescription drug donut hole will receive a 50 percent discount on their brand name prescription drugs and cheaper generic drugs. As of March, enrollees hitting the donut hole nationwide had already saved an average of \$800 on their prescription drugs.
Free Preventive Services	Medicare charged co-pays and deductibles for preventive services like mammograms and other cancer screenings to the 1.5 million North Carolina residents on Medicare.	All 1.5 million North Carolina residents on Medicare may receive recommended preventive services with no out-of-pocket costs.
Free Annual Wellness Visit	Medicare did not offer a free annual checkup to the 1.5 million North Carolina residents on Medicare.	All North Carolina residents on Medicare may receive a free annual wellness visit. As of April 20, 17,696 people on Medicare in North Carolina have received a free annual wellness visit.
Lower than Projected Premiums	All 1.5 million North Carolina residents on Medicare paid nearly \$8 less per month in Medicare Part B Premiums than the Medicare Trustees projected in 2009.	All 1.5 million North Carolina residents on Medicare now pay nearly \$5 less per month in Medicare Part B Premiums than the Medicare Trustees projected in 2009. In 2011, this will save a total of \$86.9 million on premiums for Medicare enrollees in North Carolina.
Medicare Advantage	100 percent of North Carolina residents on Medicare had the option of joining a Medicare Advantage plan.	100 percent of North Carolina residents on Medicare have the option of joining a Medicare Advantage plan.