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**HHS Secretary Sebelius Joins Americans Across the Country in Mourning Senator Edward M. Kennedy**

HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius issued the following statement on August 26:

"I join Americans across the country in mourning the death of Senator Edward M. Kennedy and extending my deepest condolences to the Kennedy family. The Kennedy's are a part of my family's political history. I vividly remember my parents' joyous celebration when President Kennedy was elected in 1960. I was proud to serve as one of Senator Kennedy's Kansas campaign co-chairs in 1980 and it was a tremendous honor to work with him throughout the course of my career.

"Senator Kennedy spent his career fighting to improve the health of the American people and extend services to those in need. His work touches all of us and almost every corner of the Department of Health and Human Services. Today, because of his work, senior citizens who would otherwise go hungry will receive meals. Millions of children across the country will have access to medical care and Head Start. And our nation is a fairer and more just place because of his tireless efforts to promote civil rights and end discrimination.

"Ensuring that all Americans have access to quality, affordable health care was one of the causes of Senator Kennedy's life and we will carry his mission forward. We will honor his incredible legacy of advocacy and accomplishment through our work. Senator Kennedy never let us forget our most important charge as public servants: representing the American people and giving voice to those who have been ignored or forgotten. We will always remember that lesson and his incredible service to our nation."

**Secretary Sebelius Releases New Report: *America's Seniors and Health Insurance Reform: Protecting Coverage and Strengthening Medicare***

Speaking at the Hattie Holmes Wellness Center in Washington, DC on August 27<sup>th</sup>, Secretary Sebelius together with ASA Kathy Greenlee announced the release of the report *America's Seniors and Health Insurance Reform: Protecting Coverage and Strengthening Medicare*. The report highlights the problems with the status quo of health care that leave seniors paying escalating costs while outlining how health insurance reform will strengthen Medicare and protect coverage for seniors.

In her comments, the Secretary noted that "Senior citizens have seen their premiums and out-of-pocket drug costs rise and without reform, many seniors on Medicare could lose access to the doctor they know and trust," Secretary

Sebelius said. "Health insurance reform will protect the coverage seniors depend on, improve the quality of care and help make Medicare strong."

To read the report in its entirety, go to <http://www.HealthReform.gov>

### **Ten Flu Prevention PSA Contest Finalists Chosen; Now the Public Votes for the Winner!**

Help us select a winner! It's time for the public to vote for the best video in the HHS Flu Prevention Public Service Announcement (PSA) Contest. The producer of the winning video gets a \$2,500 cash award, and the winning PSA will be broadcast on national television!

Voting started on YouTube at 12:01 a.m. Eastern time, Saturday, Aug. 29, and runs through 11:59 p.m. Eastern time, Wednesday, Sept.16.

Information on the contest and how to vote as well as a wide range of seasonal and H1N1 (swine) flu information are available at <http://www.flu.gov>.

### **HHS Secretary Delivers Keynote at SMP Conference**

In her keynote address at the 2009 SMP (formerly called Senior Medicare Patrol) National Conference in Washington, DC, Secretary Sebelius highlighted the value of the Administration on Aging (AoA) sponsored SMP Projects by noting the program has saved taxpayers \$100 million dollars during the past twelve years. Sebelius acknowledged that the challenge is to ensure that Medicare and Medicaid claim payments are processed quickly, efficiently and legitimately. Before an audience of program volunteer coordinators and trainers, she added "The strongest defense against crime is not law enforcement, it is informed citizens."

Since 1997 AoA has funded SMP projects to recruit and train retired professionals and other senior citizens about how to recognize and report instances or patterns of health care fraud. The activities of the SMP program also serve to enhance the financial, emotional, physical and mental well-being of older adults — thereby increasing their capacity to maintain security and independence in retirement, and to make better financial and healthcare decisions. SMP projects partner with the aging network, as well as community, faith-based, tribal, and health care organizations. Together they utilize a variety of outreach strategies to educate and empower their peers to identify, prevent and report health care fraud. Currently, the SMP program funds 54 projects in all states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

For a recap of Secretary Sebelius' remarks go to <http://www.govexec.com>

To learn more about AoA's SMP program go to

## **AoA News**

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### **The Administration on Aging (AoA) Celebrates the Life of Senator Edward M. Kennedy**

The Administration on Aging (AoA) celebrates the life of Senator Edward M. Kennedy. Throughout his career in the U.S. Senate, he worked tirelessly to support programs that assist older people, especially those programs that enable millions of older Americans and individuals with disabilities to live independently at home among their families and friends. Among those programs and services are those provided by the Older Americans Act, which operate in every community across our land with the help of AoA's national aging services network. Senator Kennedy had a personal commitment to nutrition programs for older Americans, in particular the home-delivered meals program for homebound and at-risk seniors which he helped to create in 1972. Senator Kennedy considered these senior meals programs to be “among our nation’s greatest successes,” reaching millions of older Americans in their own homes, neighborhoods and communities.

Senator Kennedy also strongly supported programs that harnessed the contributions of America’s senior citizens. He recognized that older Americans are a valuable asset to the communities in which they live. In April, President Obama signed the Kennedy Serve America Act into law, which expands service opportunities for Americans of all ages. We join the nation in mourning the passing of Senator Kennedy, and thank him for his unwavering commitment to helping those in need.

### **ASA Greenlee Off and Running**

Assistant Secretary for Aging Kathy Greenlee has hit the ground running since her confirmation on June 25. Since that time she has addressed the 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging in Minneapolis, the SMP (Senior Medicare Patrol) Conference in Washington, D.C. and introduced Secretary Sebelius at the Hattie Holmes Wellness Center in Washington, DC. She will don her running shoes again this month as she begins to meet with seniors and important stakeholders across the country. Here is a glimpse of some activities on her schedule:

September 2: Annual Conference on the Meals on Wheels Association of America (MOWAA) in San Diego, CA. <http://www.mowaa.org>

September 14: - The Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging in Columbus, OH. <http://www.ohioaging.org>

September 15: United Jewish Communities in Washington, D.C.

<http://www.ujc.org>

September 22: The 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Home and Community- Based Services Conference in Denver, CO. <http://www.hcbs.org>

September 24: The California Respite Association Conference in Los Angeles, CA. <http://www.calrespite.org/>

September 28: The Southeastern Area Agencies on Aging Association in Charleston, SC. <http://www.se4a.org/>

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## **Other HHS News**

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### **Health Centers to Receive Grants to Expand and Improve Services**

HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius recently announced that the Health Resources and Services Administration has awarded \$25.7 million in grants to increase and improve health and support services at the nation's health centers.

The grants will give existing health centers the funds to add or increase mental health/substance abuse services, enable more outreach, transportation and case management services and add or increase oral health or pharmacy services. Included in the total amount is \$3.8 million for 48 planning grants to be distributed to organizations in hard hit areas that do not have health centers to help them develop new service delivery sites.

In a press release announcing the grants, Secretary Sebelius noted “These grants could not be coming at a better time. With more than 14.5 million Americans out of work, and 47 million without health insurance, the health centers are seeing more patients now than ever before.”

To read the entire press release, go to <http://www.hhs.gov/news>

### **Some Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Premiums to Slightly Increase in 2010**

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) recently announced the majority of Medicare beneficiaries currently enrolled in Medicare drug plans will not see significant changes in their premiums in 2010, but some may need to take steps to ensure they have the coverage they need when open enrollment begins later this year.

“The majority of beneficiaries enrolled in prescription drug plans should see only small changes in their Part D premiums or benefits in the coming year,” said Jonathan Blum, acting director of CMS’ Center for Health Plan Choices. He added “Although most Part D plans should have relatively stable premiums,

all beneficiaries should compare their current coverage with the plans that will be offered in 2010 when information becomes available in October.”

To read to entire press release, go to <http://www.cms.hhs.gov>

### **Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act to Take Effect January 1, 2010**

Beginning January 1<sup>st</sup>, under the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act, more people with limited incomes and resources will be eligible for “extra help” to cover the cost of prescription drugs.

Included among the changes are: (1) Medicare will no longer count as a resource any life insurance policy and (2) Medicare will no longer count as income assistance received regularly someone else for household expenses such as food, mortgage, rent, heating fuel or gas, electricity, water, and property taxes.

To learn more about the changes under this Act, go to <http://www.socialsecurity.gov>

### **AHRQ to Now Offer Health Care Pamphlets in Spanish**

HHS’ Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality now provides effective care consumer guides produced by its Effective Health Care Program in Spanish. The information provided can help Spanish-speaking seniors compare the benefits and risks of medicines or other therapies for diseases common in the elderly. It may also be useful to them when discussing treatment options with their doctors. Audio versions of many of the guides are also available.

AHRQ will provide at no cost, up to 500 copies to organizations and 200 copies to individual clinicians. For a listing of titles in Spanish and their English equivalent, go to <http://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov>

To learn more about AHRQ’s Effective health Care Program go to <http://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/>

## **Join the ONC Letter Series**

Dr. David Blumenthal, National Coordinator for Health Information Technology, recently launched a letter series to keep persons informed of the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) activities. The updates are posted to the ONC website at <http://healthit.hhs.gov>

ONC is the principal Federal entity charged with coordination of nationwide efforts to implement and use the most advanced health information technology and the electronic exchange of health information. It is at the forefront of the Obama Administration's Health IT efforts, and a resource to the entire health system to support the adoption of health information technology and the promotion of nationwide health information exchange to improve health care.

The position of National Coordinator was created in 2004, through an Executive Order, and legislatively mandated in the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act [HITECH Act] of 2009.

To subscribe to Dr. Blumenthal's letter series go to <https://service.govdelivery.com>

To learn more about ONC visit its website at <http://healthit.hhs.gov>

## **CDC Monitors Novel H1N1 Flu**

When the novel H1N1 flu outbreak was first detected in mid-April 2009, CDC began working with states to collect, compile and analyze information regarding the novel H1N1 flu outbreak, including the numbers of confirmed and probable cases of disease, and it continues to do so.

While currently a novel H1N1 vaccine is in production and its availability timetable remains uncertain, the CDC offers a number of everyday steps to take to protect your health. To learn more, go to [http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/general\\_info.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/general_info.htm)

## **Authority for the HIPAA Security Rule Moved to Office for Civil Rights**

HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius announced in August that authority for the administration and enforcement of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) Security Rule has been delegated to the Office for Civil Rights (OCR).

OCR's administration and enforcement of the Security Rule, which had previously been delegated to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services



(CMS), will eliminate duplication and increase efficiencies in how the department ensures that Americans' health information privacy is protected.

Through a separate delegation, CMS continues to have authority for administration and enforcement of the HIPAA Administrative Simplification regulations, other than privacy and security of health information.

For more information on HIPAA, go to <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/index.html>

### **Save a Life: Stay Informed About Suicide Prevention**

Suicide is a major public health concern. It is gaining renewed attention due to the faltering economy, and the age 65 and older population is not immune. Although the suicide rates among persons age 65 and older have seen a substantial decline over the years, from a rate of 30 per 100,000 in 1950 to 15 per 100,000 according to the most recent data, it remains among the top 20 causes of death for this age group.

In support of National Suicide Prevention Week, September 6-12, the HHS Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) recently announced it would increase funding to National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Crisis Centers.

SAMHSA is responsible for improving the accountability, capacity, and effectiveness of the Nation's substance abuse prevention, addictions treatment, and mental health services delivery system. To stay current with the latest publications on suicide prevention and to learn how you can support prevention activities in your community visit the SAMSHA website at <http://www.samhsa.gov/>

### **CMS Evaluates Money Follows the Person (MFP) Demonstration Program**

In a recent report, CMS provides a preliminary evaluation of its Money Follows the Person (MFP) Program enacted by Congress in 2005.

With the support of federal grant funds, 30 programs (29 states and the District of Columbia) are seeking to transition approximately 34,000 Medicaid beneficiaries with disabilities from institutional to community-based care between 2007 and 2011.

The demonstration is designed to test the types of services and supports needed to move long-term residents into community settings, whether people who move to the community have better health care outcomes and quality of life, and whether such programs save money. The report describes states' experience with transition programs for institutionalized populations before the start of the MFP demonstration. It also addresses how differences in key



program features can affect the pace and degree of implementation and, ultimately, the likelihood of meeting transition goals.

To read the report in its entirety, go to

<http://www.cms.hhs.gov>

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## **Federal Funding Opportunities**

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### **Grants.Gov Web Site Upgraded to Accommodate ARRA Searches**

HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius unveiled a new feature on Grants.gov to help users find and apply for The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) grant opportunities. Grants.gov contains information about finding and applying for all federal grant programs.

This new feature on the homepage of Grants.gov will direct users to Recovery Act opportunities and other Recovery Act resources and links to <http://www.whitehouse.gov/recovery> and <http://www.recovery.gov>

For more information about Grants.gov, go to <http://www.grants.gov>

For more information about The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, go to <http://www.whitehouse.gov/recovery> and <http://www.recovery.gov>

### **\$24 Million Health IT Funding to Improve Disability Process**

Michael J. Astrue, Commissioner of Social Security, announced the availability of \$24 million in contracts to provide the agency with electronic medical records to improve the service provided to applicants for disability benefits.

Through a Request for Proposals available on <http://www.fedbizopps.gov>, Social Security is looking for health care providers, provider networks, and health information exchanges to participate in its Medical Evidence Gathering and Analysis through the Health Information Technology (IT) program. The contract opportunities are funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. **The application deadline is September 18, 2009.**

To learn more about this opportunity, go to

<https://www.fbo.gov>

To read Commissioner Astrue's entire press release, go to

<http://www.socialsecurity.gov>

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## **More Aging News**

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## **National Telecommunications and Information Administration Is in Need of Grant Reviewers**

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) is seeking experienced professionals to help review applications to the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP). Funding for BTOP grants is a part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

The grant application deadline was August 20, 2009 and awards are to be determined by the end of the year. Reviewers can come from organizations that apply to BTOP but these reviewers would not review applications from their own state.

To apply to be a reviewer or to learn more about BTOP, please go to <http://www.broadbandusa.gov/>

## **EPA Launches Aging Initiative**

The mission of the recently launched Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Aging Initiative is to protect human health and the environment through public education on how the environment impacts the health and well-being of older Americans. The Aging Initiative has a four pronged agenda that will benefit older people, their children and grandchildren, and the public at large.

The Aging Initiative's monthly List serve provides a compendium of announcements, funding opportunities, recent research findings, a calendar of upcoming public health and aging conferences and meetings, and other matters of current interest. Included among its informational materials is a series of fact sheets on various environmental toxicants that address potential hazards to health and how to minimize or avoid their effects.

The EPA Aging Initiative's latest publication, *Growing Smarter, Living Healthier: A Guide to Smart Growth and Active Aging* discusses the importance of urban design that facilitates healthy aging and physical activity. This guidebook offers practical suggestions for older adults on how to engage in the planning and redevelopment process and provides links to resources concerned with remodeling neighborhoods to improve access to local amenities whether one lives in a city, suburb, or small town.

To learn more about the EPA Aging Initiative and to join its List Serve, go to <http://www.epa.gov/aging/>

An electronic copy of this guidebook is available at <http://www.epa.gov/aging/bhc/guide/index.html>

To obtain hardcopies of the guidebook, fact sheets or to order other materials at no cost, go to <http://www.epa.gov/aging/resources/factsheets/order.htm>

## **NCOA Offers Free Reverse Mortgage Counseling Services**

In response to increased pressure on the income and savings of older adults, the National Council on Aging (NCOA) is offering free counseling for seniors through its Reverse Mortgage Counseling Services (RMCS) Network. RMCS counselors will waive the usual \$125 fee to help older homeowners understand how these loans, along with community programs and other options, could help them to remain in their homes.

**Consumers age 62+ can schedule a free reverse mortgage counseling session through September 30, 2009 by calling 1-800-510-0301.**

To learn more about NCOA's Reverse Mortgage Counseling Services, go to <http://www.ncoa.org>

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### **Submit a Story!**

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Do you have a story about ....Click on the link below to share your story with us, and it may appear on our website or in this eNewsletter!

<http://www.aoa.gov>

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### **Conferences**

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Stay up to date with the latest aging meetings and conferences by visiting the AoA events calendar at: <http://www.aoa.gov>

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