

Health Headlines

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HHS Says Medicare Advantage Premiums Down, Program Stronger Than Ever

Medicare Advantage premiums have fallen by 7 percent, while program enrollment has climbed 10 percent over the last year, HHS announced in a February 1 press release. HHS said average monthly premiums decreased from \$33.97 to \$31.54 between 2011 and 2012, and enrollment increased from 11.7 million to 12.8 million over that same period. These figures appear to confirm projections about the program from September 2011.

According to the press release, HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius declared when announcing these figures that “[t]he Medicare Advantage program is stronger than ever.” Other Medicare Advantage program highlights included: a high degree of consumer choice, with an average of 26 plan options available in each county throughout the country; increased access; and more beneficiaries with Four- and Five-star plans. HHS attributed these favorable trends in part to the passage of the Affordable Care Act, also noting that Medicare Advantage premiums have fallen 16 percent since the Act’s passage.

HHS also noted that, under the Affordable Care Act, Medicare Advantage plans with high quality scores in 2012 will begin to receive incentives, including quality bonus payments. Five-Star Medicare Advantage and Part D plans also will be able to market and enroll new beneficiaries throughout the year.

To view the HHS press release, click [here](#). To view publicly available Medicare Advantage data, as of February 1, 2012, click [here](#).

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