Retired Governmental Employees Association Newsletter
Article on North Carolina Senior Care

GOV. EASLEY LAUNCHES NEW PRESCRIPTION DRUG PLAN FOR SENIORS

Gov. Mike Easley has been traveling across North Carolina since the beginning of October to talk to senior citizens about the Senior Care program, the state's prescription drug plan for seniors. The Senior Care program is designed specifically to provide assistance to eligible North Carolina seniors who are coping with the rising costs of prescription medicine.

"The North Carolina Senior Care program is a way to help our seniors get the prescriptions they need at a price they can afford," said Easley. "Our seniors were there when we needed them, and North Carolina will be there now that they need us."

Senior Care offers a traditional drug benefit program under which the state covers 60 percent of the first $1,000 worth of the cost for prescription drugs and insulin for the treatment of cardiovascular (heart) disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (asthma, emphysema, bronchitis) and diabetes. One or more of these diseases affects about 75 percent of North Carolina's elderly. An estimated 150,000 senior citizens in North Carolina are expected to be eligible for the program.

To be eligible for Senior Care, a person must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Be age 65 or older, and
- Have a total annual income from 2001 (both taxable and nontaxable) of $17,180 or less if single, and $23,220 or less if married, and
- Be diagnosed with cardiovascular (heart) disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease or diabetes, and
- Not be eligible for Medicaid or other third party prescription drug insurance benefits.

The Health and Wellness Trust Commission of North Carolina has contracted with the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services to administer the Senior Care prescription drug benefit program.

Seniors are currently enrolling in the program, and applications and program information are available at local pharmacies, aging agencies, departments of public health, departments of social services, hospitals and community health centers throughout the state; online at www.ncseniorcare.com; and by request from the toll-free Senior Care hotline at 1-866-226-1388.

Applications will be processed on an ongoing, monthly basis, with new participants enrolled on the first of each month. Eligible participants will be notified of their acceptance and will receive welcome packets containing benefit details and personalized ID cards.