



## 4 Tips For You to Use During Medicare Open Enrollment

Medicare Open Enrollment takes place each year between October 15th and December 7th. Seniors should take action during this time period to select the health care coverage that best meets their needs. These actions can include changing their Medicare coverage, joining a new prescription drug plan, or enrolling in Medicare for the first time. The coverage selected during Medicare Open Enrollment will begin, in most instances, on January 1st the following year.

Finding the right plan for you or for your loved one, is not always easy. There are a multitude of options and combinations available for Medicare coverage today. The key is to find the health care coverage that best meets your unique needs. We want to share four tips to use in selecting the right Medicare plan for you.

1. Read the mail you receive from Medicare. Many of us are guilty of only glancing at the mail we receive. We do not take the time to carefully review the contents. Be sure to thoroughly read the mail you receive from Medicare. During the fall months, Medicare sends out important notices regarding your current health care coverage. Both the Plan Annual Notice of Change (ANOC) and the Evidence of Coverage (EOC) highlight the costs and benefits changes for the upcoming year. Read these documents in full. The information contained inside of them is a crucial factor in your decision to keep your current plan or enroll in a new one for the next year. The cost and coverage of your plan can change each (Continued on Page 2)

(Contd. from Page 1) year. Do not assume your plan will stay the same.

2. Learn the difference between traditional Medicare and Medicare Advantage. It is important to know the difference between types of Medicare plans. Traditional Medicare is run by the government. Medicare Part A is your hospital coverage and Medicare Part B is your health insurance. Medicare Part A can assist with payment for hospital and skilled nursing facility stays. Medicare Part B applies to doctor visits, lab testing and durable medical equipment. In contrast, Medicare Advantage plans are offered by private insurers. While Advantage plans may restrict members to their network of doctors and hospitals, many of these plans combine with a prescription drug plan as a cost effective option. Advantage plans frequently include more than just medical services by incorporating vision, dental and hearing benefits.

3. Confirm with your doctors before you choose. Medicare Advantage plans limit options by only covering costs from a set network of doctors and hospitals. Before selecting an Advantage Plan, be sure to confirm with your doctors that they are a part of the plan's network. Also, keep in mind, plan coverage changes each year and there is no guarantee that your doctor will continue to participate. You should not wait to get the information you need. Instead, be proactive and talk to your doctors, a representative, or use Medicare's tool Physician Compare.

4. Consider a Medigap policy for yourself or a loved one. In most instances, your traditional Medicare plan will not pay for 100% of your health care needs. This is where Medicare Supplemental Insurance policies, also known as Medigap policies, can step in and provide assistance. Medigap policies assist enrollees of traditional Medicare A and B.

Do not wait to find the information you need to choose the right Medicare plan for you or for your loved ones during the Open Enrollment Period. Ask your questions and make sure you receive clear answers. Remember, in almost all situations, Medicare will only pay a very small amount of your long-term care needs. Do not wait to schedule a meeting with Attorney Alan Hougum on how you and your family can plan to afford the high costs of long-term care today.



## How to Plan Ahead When a Loved One is Diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease

The diagnosis of Alzheimer's Disease for yourself or a loved one can be (Continued on Page 3)

(Contd. from Page 2) emotionally devastating.

Although you may have dealt with significant symptoms for an extended period of time, the diagnosis itself is significant. There is no cure for Alzheimer's Disease. Although there are medications available, they are only able to assist your loved one with symptoms and cannot slow or reverse the progression of this debilitating disease.

There are three recognized phases of the disease: mild, moderate, and severe. In the early stages of the disease, many patients can be lulled into a false sense of security as symptoms are less severe. In fact, many people can live independently in the mild to moderate stages of Alzheimer's Disease.

It is critical for you and your loved ones to act during the early stages of the disease. Planning ahead is the first step you need to take when you or one of your loved one receives this diagnosis. You may question how you can plan ahead for a disease that has an unpredictable course of progression. Planning ahead for your family members, your finances, your care and your goals, can be done. It should be started immediately due to the uncertainty that always accompanies this diagnosis.

The planning process begins with informing family members. While this is a very personal matter, your family needs time to prepare emotionally. Your family also needs time to plan for how it will support you. It is important to clearly communicate what you need from each family member. You do not want one person to plan on one course of action, while the rest of the family is planning another. The planning process will proceed much smoother with everyone working together.

After you have talked about your diagnosis with your family, you and your loved ones will want to plan for your finances and your care. This is the time to meet with an elder law attorney. Your elder law attorney is able to help you understand the legal documents you need in place in the event of incapacity. You can use documents, such as the durable power of attorney, to select the decision makers you want to have legal authority to make your choices when you cannot.

Your elder law attorney will also be able to help you find the right care for you and determine the way you be able to pay for it. Unfortunately, as the disease progresses, the care needs of the diagnosed individual will increase. There may come a time when you or your loved one will no longer be able to live at home. You need to know the available options in your local community. It is important to talk to your elder law attorney as soon as possible as there are more planning strategies available the earlier you plan.

We know the diagnosis of Alzheimer's Disease is devastating. Planning ahead with your family, both legally and financially, can eliminate much of the stress you and your loved ones will deal with as the disease progresses. We are here to help you with this difficult diagnosis and plan for yourself and your family. Do not wait to contact our team and schedule your appointment with Attorney Alan Hougum.



**HOUGUM**  
**LAW FIRM, LLC**  
ESTATE PLANNING & ELDER LAW

305 S. 18TH AVENUE, SUITE 200  
WAUSAU, WISCONSIN 54401  
WWW.HOUGUMLAW.COM  
715-843-5001  
INFO@HOUGUMLAW.COM



**HOUGUM**  
**LAW FIRM, LLC**  
ESTATE PLANNING & ELDER LAW

Attorney Alan Hougum and his compassionate team will help you protect yourself and the people you love with strategic planning strategies, such as wills, asset protection and trusts, powers of attorney, estate trusts, elder law planning, Medicaid crisis planning, Medicaid eligibility and application, probate and estate administration, avoiding probate, charitable planning and giving, special needs, and estate tax planning. Hougum Law Firm, LLC, serves the entire Wausau, Wisconsin area.

Our office is located in Wausau at  
305 S. 18th Avenue, Suite 200, Wausau, Wisconsin 54401. Do you have questions you need answered before or after your appointment? Just let us know! Contact us by email at [info@hougumlaw.com](mailto:info@hougumlaw.com) or call us at 715-843-5001.