

Retiree Prescription Drug Benefits Report

Department of Budget & Management

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February 25, 2025



WES MOORE
Governor

ARUNA MILLER
Lieutenant Governor

HELENE GRADY
Secretary

MARC L. NICOLE
Deputy Secretary

February 25, 2025

The Honorable Wes Moore
Governor of Maryland
State House
100 State Circle
Annapolis MD 21401

Senator Guy Guzzone
Chair
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
3 West Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis MD 21401

Senator Michael Jackson
Chair
Joint Committee on Pensions
3 West Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis MD 21401

Delegate Ben Barnes
Chair
House Appropriations Committee
121 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis MD 21401

Delegate Catherine Forbes
Chair
Joint Committee on Pensions
304 Lowe House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis MD 21401

Dear Governor Moore, Senator Guzzone, Senator Jackson, Delegate Barnes, and Delegate Forbes:

Chapter 767 of 2019 (State Prescription Drug Benefits - Retiree Benefits - Revisions) requires the Department to submit quarterly reports to the Governor, House Appropriations Committee, Senate Budget and Taxation Committee, and the Joint Committee on Pensions on the:

1. status of establishing the Maryland State Retiree Prescription Drug Coverage Program, Maryland State Retiree Catastrophic Prescription Drug Assistance Program, and Maryland State Retiree Life-Sustaining Prescription Drug Assistance Program (the three programs set forth in Chapter 767 relating to the State's termination of prescription drug benefits for Medicare-eligible retirees), including:
 - a. the status of procuring any contracts necessary to operate the programs, and
 - b. the prescription drugs determined to qualify for reimbursement under the Maryland State Retiree Life-Sustaining Prescription Drug Assistance Program;
2. availability of one-on-one counseling services for Medicare-eligible retirees to assist retirees in selecting a Medicare prescription drug benefit plan;

3. details of the health reimbursement accounts (HRA) or other programs to help with prescription drug costs in the three prescription drug assistance programs, including:
 - a. the specific out-of-pocket costs eligible for reimbursement,
 - b. the required process for receiving reimbursement,
 - c. the method of reimbursement,
 - d. the timing of reimbursement, and
 - e. a plan to use debit cards to process reimbursements in a convenient and efficient manner, and

4. in total and by category for the previous quarter, the number of issues and concerns reported to the hotline.

As you are aware, the transition of Medicare-eligible retirees from the State prescription drug plan to individual Medicare Part D plans commenced and the Department of Budget and Management continues to work hard to ensure a smooth transition for our retirees in compliance with Chapter 767 of 2019. I apologize for the delay in providing this latest quarterly update but am pleased to share the progress that's been made since our last update. In particular, as of December 31, 2024, we had over 50,000 of our ~56,600 retirees/dependents that were enrolled in the State's SilverScript plan enroll in a Medicare prescription drug plan through the State's vendor Via Benefits.

Please see the report attached for a substantive update and do not hesitate to reach out to me or DBM's Director of Legislative Affairs Dana Phillips (410-260-6068) with questions or any additional information that would be helpful.

Sincerely,



Helene Grady
Secretary

Attachment

cc: Victoria Gruber, Department of Legislative Services

**Quarterly Report on the Transition of Retirees to Medicare Part D
For Prescription Drug Coverage Per Chapter 767 of 2019
Department of Budget & Management
Update – February 2025**

Benefits Transition Update

In September 2024, the Department announced Via Benefits as the State’s Medicare Part D partner. Via Benefits operates one of the country’s largest private Medicare marketplaces and has helped more than two million retirees plan, shop for, enroll in, and maintain individual coverage that fits their needs. Via Benefits was selected because of its proven track record to provide personalized, comprehensive, high-touch service. Via Benefits’ licensed benefits advisors are helping our impacted retirees explore and enroll in a new Medicare Part D plan by offering one-on-one counseling and unbiased guidance to ensure retirees understand their options and make an informed decision.

Please see highlights of Via Benefits’ and the State’s communication and engagement with retirees below:

1. The week of September 9, 2024, on behalf of the State, Via Benefits mailed an announcement letter to over 47,500 retirees and impacted dependents of retirees. In addition to announcing Via Benefits as our trusted partner, the letter provided detailed information about Medicare Part D plans, the State’s financial assistance programs (the Health Reimbursement Arrangement and the Life-Sustaining Prescription Drug Program), Via Benefits’ contact information, and included Via Benefits’ website and information about how retirees could attend a webinar or an in-person informational session.
2. Via Benefits’ call center began accepting calls from and making outbound outreach calls to State retirees the week of September 9, 2024. As of December 31, 2024, Via Benefits representatives had assisted 168,031 State retirees or dependents through inbound calls and had placed 78,205 outbound calls to State retirees and dependents. The average call wait time from September 9 through December 31, 2024, was 8 minutes and 43 seconds. We monitored and reviewed individual cases where retirees’ wait times were significantly longer than the average wait time and identified and promoted several tips for how to avoid extended wait times. Since January 1, 2025, the call wait time average is 3 minutes and 17 seconds.
3. On Friday, September 20, 2024, the Employee Benefits Division (EBD) sent an email to those with an email address in our Health Benefits system. More than 2,000 retirees were sent an email informing them of informational webinars and in-person sessions. EBD is considering a campaign in 2025 to obtain email addresses for a larger portion of retirees.
4. Via Benefits released two additional communications to retirees in late September. First, an *Introducing Via Benefits Guide* with detailed information about Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA) eligibility during the week of September 23rd; and then a *Get Ready to Enroll Guide* the week of September 30, 2024. We have attached copies of each of these documents to this report for your information. They are also accessible on the Via Benefits Maryland website:
 - a. <https://my.viabenefits.com/maryland>
5. Via Benefits hosted 10 webinars September 23 through September 27, 2024, and 4,759 individuals registered to participate. Over 2,000 questions were asked during these sessions, which typically included about 1 hour to 1 hour 15 minutes of presentation and approximately 45 minutes of questions and answers.
6. Beginning October 1, 2024, Via Benefits began hosting in-person informational meetings in locations throughout the state. By October 31, 2024, Via Benefits had hosted over 95 meetings covering each Maryland county and Baltimore City. Nearly 9,000 retirees registered to attend an in-person informational meeting.
 - a. During the webinar and in-person meetings, a Via Benefits presenter led attendees through a detailed presentation that explained the changes to their prescription drug program, the process to enroll, and reviewed many frequently asked questions. The presentation also included a recorded

message about the transition from EBD Director Christina Kuminski. After each session, webinar and in-person, attendees asked questions in the general question and answer session.

7. On October 9, the Maryland General Assembly Delegation Chairs received an email they could share with their delegation. The email included information about the transition to Medicare Part D that included Via Benefits' contact information, links to register for the remaining in-person sessions, and a link to the recorded meeting presentation that can be viewed on demand.
8. Through December 31, 2024, nearly 50,000 retirees and their dependents had enrolled in Medicare Part D plans through Via Benefits and more are continuing to enroll either through scheduled appointments with a licensed benefits advisor or through Via Benefits' self-service website. Retirees who lost coverage through the State as of December 31, 2024, can continue to enroll during a Special Enrollment Period through February 28, 2025.
9. Via Benefits has had positive survey responses on its Voice of the Customer (VOC) survey. As of February 11th, the customer response was 4.56 out of 5.00. Via Benefits is continually monitoring its call center's wait times, service and enrollment scores, and overall trends. The State team has access to the customer service data daily and meets weekly with the Via Benefits team to discuss trends and progress.
10. On December 9th, Via Benefits released a 'last chance to enroll' notice via certified mail to 4,244 State SilverScript participants. In addition to the certified notice, apart from 21 individuals without valid phone numbers, all have been contacted via telephone regularly. Outreach will continue through the end of February 2025.
11. On or about December 15, 2024, HRA Debit Cards began being mailed from Via Benefits' selected VISA card vendor. A debit card is issued to each eligible Medicare beneficiary. Issuing debit cards is an ongoing process as individuals become eligible. As of February 6, 2025, 44,090 cards had been issued to the 44,344 eligible retirees and eligible dependents.
12. In January 2025, Via Benefits began mailing information about Medicare Part D plans to retirees that will be turning 65 to inform them of the steps they need to take to elect a plan. The introductory document is mailed approximately 7 months before the retirees' 65th birthday and includes how to contact Via Benefits and the actions they will need to take as they prepare for Medicare eligibility. This document is also tailored to the retirees that are eligible for the HRA and retirees that are not eligible for the HRA.

Health Reimbursement Account (HRA) Update

Via Benefits received data for each eligible retiree and their dependents to include HRA allocation, when applicable. Frequently Asked Questions related to this transition and posted on DBM's retiree website were updated on November 4, 2024, to address how Via Benefits will work to prevent debit card fraud and explain more about the security of HRA debit cards. Eligible retirees and their dependents who enrolled in a Medicare Part D plan by December 2, 2024, received their HRA debit card by January 1, 2025. Individual retirees receive one debit card, and a retiree and spouse receive two debit cards.

Life-Sustaining Prescription Drug Assistance Program

A detailed letter about the Life-Sustaining Prescription Drug Assistance Program was mailed to eligible retirees and their eligible dependents in December 2024. The detailed letter, the 2025 Drug List, and a "What Retirees Need to Know" video about the Program is posted on the DBM Retirees website. An official Summary Plan Description is expected to be available in March 2025.

Retiree Focus Group

As part of this transition, the Department has relied heavily on feedback from a small retiree focus group, which has been very helpful. The group met 5 times and provided critical feedback on communications materials before they were

mailed, helped us prepare the informational presentations, and shared real-time feedback from their networks of retirees regarding the experience with Via Benefits and common questions being asked. Given the value of the focus group's feedback, we extended the meetings into 2025 and recently met on February 6, 2025.

Frequently Asked Questions

The Department continues to update Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) in tandem with Via Benefits to assure the retirees are receiving regular updates. Updates will continue to be posted to our Retiree website as they become available.

Ongoing Efforts

The Department, Via Benefits and the Focus Group members continue to receive questions on specific topics, which include:

- Debit card support – lost cards and transactions declined
- HRA Funding Eligibility and the Eligibility Criteria
- HRA Funding Inquiries – allocation amounts and the frequency of the allocation
- New Enrollee Application status
- Plan Coverage Questions – Who to call?

All information can be found on our website and within our published FAQs, recorded webinar and recorded in-person presentation. We have determined through the transition process that focusing future messaging on 'how to use the program' by highlighting the information available to address the five (5) topics referenced above may be the most beneficial to retirees. For this reason, the Department is working with Via Benefits to develop a final campaign with an emphasis on the issues of most concern to retirees. The method of delivery and timeline are currently in development.

Summary

Finally, the number of Medicare Beneficiaries enrolled in the SilverScript prescription drug program in December 2024 was just under 56,600, which means this was the transition group. It was important to the Department to notify any retiree who was enrolled in at least one State of Maryland health benefit and the Department made outreach to 60,442 retirees/dependents to ensure they were aware of the change, as well as the financial assistance programs should they wish to change their election(s) with the State. Outreach continues as retirees become Medicare eligible throughout the year to ensure they have a smooth transition.

In summary:

- 56,595 Medicare Beneficiaries would transition from SilverScript to Medicare Part D on January 1, 2025
- 50,535 have enrolled from the transition group as of February 11, 2025
- 1,322 individuals from the transition group advised Via Benefits they were making a different decision
- Enrollments continue to process for those who did not take action prior to January 1, 2025
- Via Benefits contacted 99.9% of the transition group via telephone and mail; 224 did not have valid contact information
- ~ 92% Confirmed Enrollment / Alternate Election