

September 22 Medicare Part D Town Hall Meeting: Evaluation report

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INTRODUCTION

Disability Benefits 101 organized a Town Hall Meeting in an effort to educate individuals and interested organizations regarding Medicare Part D, the new Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit coming January, 2006.

The Town Hall meeting featured expert speakers, discussion groups that addressed specific topics regarding Medicare and Medi-Cal, along with materials and resources that were free to participants at the meeting.

The Town Hall meeting took place on September 22, 2005 at the Wilshire Grand Hotel, Downtown Los Angeles, in the Pacific and Sierra Ballrooms from 1:00 PM to 4:30 PM.

Sponsors of the event included:

- Disability Benefits 101 at the World Institute on Disability
- California Health Incentives Improvement Project

- The Social Security Administration Region IX
- California Health Advocates
- The California Endowment

Participants in the event were invited to an afternoon of information, discussion, free materials and refreshments to help them learn about the new Medicare drug benefits, how to get help when they need it, and how to access the new drug plans.

Especially encouraged to attend were:

- Medicare beneficiaries
- Medicare beneficiaries who also use Medi-Cal
- Community non-profit organizations
- Advocates
- Church Groups
- Educators

After an opening session for all who came, benefit experts

formed small discussion groups to listen to and answer participants' questions.

Experts in attendance included representatives from:

- Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program (HICAP)
- Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services
- National Senior Citizens Law Center
- Legal Aid Society of San Mateo County
- Social Security Administration
- California Department of Developmental Disabilities
- Health Consumer Alliance
- Western Center on Law and Poverty
- California Department of Health Services, Medi-Cal Staff
- National Health Law Program
- California Health Advocates

EVALUATION RESULTS

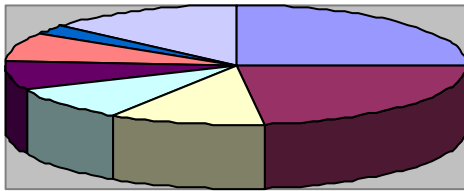
Respondents

The total number of attendees was 185. Of the 185 people who attended, 28.6% (53 individuals) filled out the evaluation questionnaire.

The majority of the evaluation respondents (25%) reported hearing about the Town Hall Meeting through a non-profit organization for which they either worked or volunteered. 23% reported hearing about the

meeting through a colleague connected with their place of work, 11% through an email, 9% through the Disability Benefits 101 website, 8% through an advertisement or a flyer, 8% through a friend or relative, and 2% through a church

How Respondents Heard About the Town Hall Meeting



- Non-profit org.
- Colleague at work
- Email
- Website
- Advertisement
- Friend or relative
- Church group
- Other

Note: See summary of results for respondents' descriptions of "other".

group. 14% reported that they had heard about the meeting in some other way, such as online or through a web search, through the Social Security Administration, the Sacramento Information Session, or during the Medicare Coalition meeting. One participant indicated that they had heard about the meeting on the AARP website. The two participants who indicated where they saw an advertisement or flyer listed the Foothill Vocational OPP., and at a meeting at Department of Public Social Services in their city.

Most of the Town Hall Meeting evaluation respondents (28%) were employees or volunteers at non-profit organizations. The non-profits that re-

spondents represented included an AIDS service center in Pasadena, AIDS Prevention Center in Los Angeles, ASC, California Center for Independent Living, Communities Actively Living Independent and Free, LA County Dept. of Public Social Services, Inglewood Senior Center, LAMAC, Portals Mental Rehabilitation Services, Department of Mental

Health Contract Agency, St. John's, and CFDC.

17% of the respondents indicated that they were advocates. Advocate organizations listed by respondents were APLA, a private attorney's office, CALIF, California CARE, Dept. of Mental Health Older Adult Services, DOA, LA Access to Benefits Coalition, Rep. Henry Waxman's office, Social Vocational Services Inc., and Southern CA Rehabilitation Services.

13% of the respondents described themselves as being Medicare beneficiaries, while 9% indicated that they were Medicare beneficiaries who also received Medi-Cal. 4% of the respondents indicated that they were educators. One respondent (2%) did not indicate their affiliation.

The 27% who indicated

some other affiliation specified that they were benefits planners, a representative from Goodwill, a county employee, part of a health plan staff, an employee of an HIV focused pharmacy, a physician or an employee at a physician's office, and a representative of SSA.

Of the respondents that reported which discussion group they joined, 20.8% joined the HICAP beneficiary counseling group, 18.9% wandered among several groups, 18.9% joined the Medicare Part D benefits group, 17% were in the Dual Eligible group, 7.5% Medi-Cal, and 3.8% Low Income Subsidy. The remaining 13.2% of respondents did not indicate joining a discussion group.

Respondents' Overall Ratings of the Town Hall Meeting

Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed, on a scale ranging from one to five, one indicating that they strongly disagreed, and five indicating that they strongly agreed, with seven questions designed to assess their overall satisfaction with the Town Hall Meeting. Overall,

| Descriptive Table of Evaluation Respondents | |
|---|------------|
| Affiliation | Percentage |
| Non-profit | 28 |
| Advocate | 17 |
| Medicare beneficiary | 13 |
| Medicare/Medi-Cal beneficiary | 9 |
| Educator | 4 |
| Other | 27 |

Note: See summary of results for respondents' descriptions of "other".

respondents gave high ratings on all seven questions, and the average ratings across respondents were above the neutral point (three) on every question. In other words, respondents indicated that they agreed that the presenters provided them with useful information (average rating=4.43; standard deviation from the average=.77); the presenters explained the new rules in a way that worked for them (average rating=4.08; standard deviation from the average=.90); the meeting was well organized (average rating=4.27; standard deviation from the average=.98); the meeting's length and pace was appropriate (average rating=4.28; standard deviation from the average=.99); the discussion groups were helpful (average rating=4.26; standard deviation from the average=1.0); the experts were able to answer their questions (average rating=4.39; standard deviation from the average=.92); and that they were more confident of their knowledge on Medicare Part D (average rating=4.07; standard deviation

from the average=.87).

Respondents' Comments and Suggestions for Future Meetings

The four open-ended questions at the end of the survey allowed respondents to give more in-depth information about their experiences at the Town Hall Meeting, along with their opinions and suggestions for future meetings.

A. What respondents liked the most

Of the total comments provided by participants on what they liked the most about the Town Hall Meeting, 30% referred to specific presenters, and/or the knowledge, helpfulness, etc. of the presenters and facilitators. 28% of the comments referred to the quality of the information respondents received,

and getting specific information, or answers to specific questions. 14% mentioned the discussion groups or a specific discussion group, 10% mentioned organizational aspects of the meeting, such as the pace, time, and the informal setting, 8% referred to the diversity of the representatives and presenters, 6% indicated that the Town Hall Meeting seemed to bridge community, professionals and advocates, and 4% referred to the handouts and resources that were available to participants.

B. What respondents liked the least

The majority of comments on what respondents liked least about the Town Hall Meeting were in reference to the organization of the meeting (44% of the total comments). Participants frequently mentioned that the general presentation at the beginning was too fast paced, or packed with too much information in a short amount of time. Some of the comments indicated that it was difficult to hear in the smaller discussion groups, or that the smaller groups could have been more intimate

or in smaller break-out rooms. 23% of the comments indicated that some of the respondents were pleased with all aspects of the meeting. 8% indicated

**Respondent # 49
Most Useful**

**"Great resources/
tools to empower
others."**

that some participants wanted more written materials, or handouts of the general slide presentation. 5% of the comments referred to the location in downtown Los Angeles, 5% that there were no fruits and vegetables, and an additional 5% that the parking was limited and/or expensive. The remaining 5% suggested a sense of frustration with the complexity and uncertainty of the topic, as well as with the system in general.

C. What respondents found most useful

Respondents most often commented that all of the information that was avail-

Respondent # 25

**"The information
presented was
well given,
detailed and
organized."**

SUMMARY

able, or clarification of specific issues was most useful to them (38% of the total comments.) 25% referred to the discussion groups as being most useful, while 20% mentioned all of the handouts and resources. 12% of the comments indicated that everything about the meeting was useful, while the remaining 5% mentioned the exchange of information with experts.

D. Respondents' recommendations for future meetings

Respondents had many useful suggestions on how to improve on the organizational aspects of the Town Hall Meeting in the future (46% of the comments). Included in some of these suggestions were; to have the meeting at a

time other than work hours, have healthy snack alternatives, handouts of the slide presentation, and more time to cover the topics in more detail. 32% of the suggestions recommended to "keep them coming" since so many more individuals and organizations can benefit from such meetings. Similarly, 11% of the comments suggested that there be more advertising before the event. An additional 11% of the comments suggested that it be located in a place other than downtown Los Angeles.

The average ratings respondents gave to all of the aspects of the Town Hall meeting indicate that for these Town Hall participants, the meeting was a success. In general, re-

spondents thought the presenters were knowledgeable and provided useful information in a way that worked for them. They also agreed that the meeting was well organized, had an appropriate length and pace, and that the discussion groups were helpful. In general respondents seemed to feel more confident in their Medicare Part D knowledge after the meeting.

The open-ended questions provided more detail into respondents' thoughts about the meeting. Although the comments about the meeting were mainly positive, they did have several useful suggestions for future meetings. To summarize, the predominant themes were:

- Slow the pace down a bit at the general pres-

entation or allow for more time

- Have handouts of the general presentation to capitalize the main points
- Smaller, more intimate rooms for the small group discussion that are less noisy (and smaller groups)
- Consideration of parking limitations and cost to the attendees
- Healthy refreshment choices
- Hold the meeting at times other than work day hours
- A more convenient location
- More advertising before the event
- Keep them coming!

Respondent # 53 Recommendation

"Keep them coming— and maintain the quality of the speakers."

A note of thanks to attendees at the Town Hall Meeting who participated in the evaluation. Their comments and suggestions will be used to help improve upon future meetings. Thanks also to Bryon MacDonald at the World Institute on Disability, as well as Regina Cademarti and Megan Juring at the California Health Incentives Improvement Project for their help.

Please direct any questions or comments regarding the Town Hall Evaluation to Tracey Cronin (email: tcronin@sunflower.com).

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