

Another Community Concerns from Couleecap, Inc. **Prescription Medication Assistance** **January 2008**

Many people have difficulty affording health care, including prescription medicines. A number of patient assistance programs provide help to patients who lack prescription coverage and earn less than 200% of the federal poverty level. In Wisconsin, this would be \$20,420 a year for a single person and \$34,340 a year for a family of three.

This summary focuses on The Partnership for Prescription Assistance Program (PPARx), the most widely advertised prescription assistance program.

Partnership for Prescription Assistance (PPARx) Program.

The Partnership for Prescription Assistance brings together America's pharmaceutical companies, doctors, other health care providers, patient advocacy organizations and community groups to help qualifying patients who lack prescription coverage get the medicines they need through the public or private program that's right for them. Many patients will get them free or nearly free. Among the organizations collaborating on this program is the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association, the Lupus Foundation of America, the NAACP, and the National Alliance for Hispanic Health and the National Medical Association. To access the Partnership for Prescription Assistance by phone you can call toll-free, 1-888-477-2669.

What they offer.

The Partnership for Prescription Assistance offers a single point of access to more than 475 public and private patient assistance programs, including more than 180 programs offered by pharmaceutical companies. In addition, the program provides information on nearly 10,000 free healthcare clinics and has connected more than 163,340 patients with clinics and healthcare providers in their communities.

Patients will be directed to the public or private programs most likely to meet their needs. The Partnership for Prescription Assistance helps qualifying patients without prescription coverage:

- Enroll in more than 475 patient assistance programs
- Access more than 2,500 medicines
- Learn how to contact government programs for which they may qualify, such as Medicaid, Medicare, or the State Children's Health Insurance Program

Co-Pay programs provide financial assistance for pharmaceutical products and health insurance premiums to Americans who financially and medically qualify. Visit the Partnership for Prescription Assistance website at www.pparx.org for a list of participating Copayment programs.

How it works.

The PPARx prescription assistance program was created to make it easier for low-income uninsured patients to get free or nearly free prescription medications through existing patient assistance programs, while providing the highest level of service. Once you provide the website with some basic information related to prescription medicines, income, and current prescription medicine coverage, PPARx will be able to tell you what patient assistance programs you may be eligible for.

How do I get an application? What drugs are available?

The best way to apply for a prescription assistance program is to use the PPARx program. It will gather all of the information needed to see if you qualify and will then create an application from that you can print out.

Can you add my medication to the list of approved drugs?

Decisions about which drugs are included are made by the participating pharmaceutical companies and the prescription assistance programs.

Who qualifies?

Each patient assistance program has its own eligibility criteria. If you complete the step-by-step application process, you should be able to see if you are eligible for one or more patient assistance programs. Patients with questions about the eligibility criteria of a specific program will be transferred directly to the company sponsoring that program.

Can Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries qualify?

Each patient assistance program has its own criteria. Many programs provide prescription assistance for Medicare beneficiaries who do not have full prescription drug benefits. People who are enrolled in other public and private sponsored programs that include prescription drug coverage may not be eligible for assistance; however, there are some instances in which Medicaid beneficiaries may be eligible for certain patient assistance programs.

Can I have drug coverage and still qualify for a patient assistance program?

Yes, there may be some patient assistance programs for which you may be eligible.

Can I join a patient assistance program and also have a Medicaid approved drug discount card? Can I join multiple patient assistance programs?

Yes, it is possible to belong to more than one patient assistance program.

What questions will applicants be prompted to answer?

You should be prepared to provide information about the patient, such as:

- Age
- State of residence and ZIP code
- Estimated gross annual household income
- Number of people living in household
- Brand name of prescription medicines they are currently taking or have been prescribed
- Type of health insurance and/or prescription coverage (if applicable)

Your responses to these questions are completely confidential.

How long does it take qualified patients to get their medicines?

While companies are committed to getting free or nearly free prescription medicines to eligible patients as quickly as possible, each participating patient assistance program has its own timeline. Patients can call the organization sponsoring their patient assistance program to ask when they will receive their medicines.

How should patients expect to receive their medicine?

Depending on the program, the prescription medicines are either sent to the doctor's office or sent to the patient's home. Some patient assistance programs send patients a pharmacy card in the mail that they can use to get their free or nearly free medicines at their local pharmacy.

What will I have to pay for my prescription?

Each specific program may have different requirements, depending upon your income and insurance coverage. But if you do not have insurance coverage and have a hard time affording your medicines, many patient assistance programs may provide the medicines free of charge.

How long can patients get free or nearly free medication from programs available through the PPARx prescription assistance program?

Each program has its own enrollment and renewal requirements. Many programs require patients to reapply periodically. The specifics of each program will be included in the information packet sent to the patient in the mail.

Where can I get information about specific drugs?

The best way to find out about a specific drug is to consult with your doctor or pharmacist.

For more information, visit the Partnership for Prescription Assistance website at www.pparx.org.

Additional information regarding medication coverage.

Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage

Since January 1, 2006, Medicare began offering prescription drug coverage to people with Medicare. For the first time, Medicare will help you pay for both brand name and generic drugs – whatever your income, medical history, or current coverage. If you are eligible for Medicare, you can sign up for Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage. Benefits of the Medicare prescription drug coverage:

- It is available to everyone eligible for Medicare
- It will pay for about half of your drug costs
- People with limited incomes will qualify for extra help to cover their drug costs
- It protects you against high drug expenses in the future
- It pays for brand-name and generic drugs

Medicare Prescription Drug Plans

To get Medicare prescription drug coverage, you must choose and join a Medicare drug plan. These plans are offered by insurance companies approved by Medicare. The plan you choose will depend on costs, coverage, what kind of coverage you have now, and what

coverage you will need for the future. If you have limited income and resources, you may be able to get extra help with Medicare prescription drug plan costs. You can apply in three ways: apply online through the Medicare website at www.medicare.gov; call the plan directly; or call 1-800-MEDICARE and Medicare will help you. The State Health Insurance Assistance Program has counselors in every state that can provide free, one-on-one help with your Medicare questions or problems. In Wisconsin, call 1-800-856-4398.

BadgerCare

BadgerCare is Wisconsin's program to provide health care coverage for uninsured families. By insuring both children and their parents, BadgerCare makes it easier for parents to create a happy and healthy family life. For more information go to www.dhfs.wisconsin.gov or www.access.wisconsin.gov, or contact your local County/Tribal Human or Social Services Agency.

BadgerCare Plus

BadgerCare Plus is a new program for children and families in Wisconsin who need and want health insurance. The program will be available on February 1, 2008. For more information go to www.dhfs.wisconsin.gov or www.access.wisconsin.gov to apply.