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Medicare Assistance program changes name

ST. JOSEPH — Region IV Area Agency on Aging's Medicare Assistance program is now going by a new name.

The Michigan Medicare Assistance Program (MMAP) will now be known as the State Health Insurance Program (SHIP).

"The program still offers the same, high quality Medicare counseling, just under a new name," Kara Gargano, the program's regional coordinator, said.

SHIP is free for people to use as they become eligible for Medicare, each year during the Open Enrollment period, as well as for complex questions regarding their Medicare coverage.

SHIP Counselors are volunteers providing unbiased Medicare counseling at Area Agency on Aging in St. Joseph, as well as through a network of partner sites around Berrien, Cass and Van Buren counties.

"Last year, we offered over 1,200 hours of counseling services and were able to save consumers a total of \$1.3 million, or about \$891 per person," Gargano said. "This program not only helps people navigate the complex world of Medicare, but it also brings people significant savings on their health care plans."

To learn more about free Medicare Assistance through Area Agency on Aging, visit <https://areaagencyonaging.org/medicare-medicaid/> or call the Info-Line at 800-654-2810.

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About Region IV Area Agency on Aging

Region IV Area Agency on Aging has been serving older adults, people with disabilities and caregivers for over 50 years. RIV AAA is a private, not-for-profit corporation. Established in 1974 for the business of developing age supportive commerce and services, it plays a major role in planning, funding, and delivery of a host of services. Empowerment and independence of community members are driving themes behind its efforts. Designated by the State of Michigan to receive federal Older Americans Act funds for planning and development, the agency manages an array of government contracts for service delivery in Southwest Michigan. Its primary service area includes Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren counties. For more information about the RIVAAA, visit www.areaagencyonaging.org.