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Baltimore City Extends Efforts to Help City Residents with Medicare Part D

BALTIMORE, MD (January 31, 2006)— Baltimore City Health Department Commissioner Dr. Joshua M. Sharfstein and Commission on Aging and Retirement Education Director John P. Stewart announced today that Baltimore City is extending its Medicare Part D Surveillance and Response Initiative through the month of February.

“We’ve got to keep going to make sure that Baltimore City residents receive the medications they need and deserve under Medicare Part D,” said Dr. Sharfstein.

“As long as we are helping Medicare beneficiaries, we cannot let up,” said Mr. Stewart. “We are enrolling people into this new program one at a time.”

Since 12:01 am on January 1, 2006, Baltimore has treated the implementation of Medicare Part D as a potential public health emergency. Baltimore City has established a 24-hour surveillance program, has created an electronic follow-up database, has provided immediate support to pharmacists, has advocated for city residents, and has paid for medications as a last resort.

So far, Baltimore City pharmacists from 39 pharmacies in 18 different zip codes have made 98 reports of significant problems with Medicare Part D.

To date, the Baltimore City Health Department has provided direct assistance to pharmacists to resolve Part D problems in 54 cases. The Health Department has committed funds to pay for emergency supplies of medication for 25 patients at a cost of \$3770.45. These medications include essential heart, lung, blood pressure, and psychiatric medications.

When pharmacists report problems, the patients are later contacted by a case worker from the Commission on Aging and Retirement (CARE). The agency is also helping hundreds of other city residents directly with Medicare Part D problems, and thousands of people with the complex enrollment requirement.

Another decision on any further extension of this program will be made by the end of February. For additional information on the Medicare Part D Surveillance and Response initiative, visit our website at <http://www.baltimorecitymedicare.org/>.

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