

RENSELAER COUNTY, UNIFIED FAMILY SERVICES

DEPARTMENT FOR THE AGING

HIICAP FAQs

What is the Health Insurance Information, Counseling and Assistance Program (HIICAP)?

- NY State's federally-funded State Health Assistance Program (SHIP)
- In **Rensselaer County**, HIICAP is administered by **Unified Family Services, Department for the Aging**
- HIICAP educates the public about Medicare, Medicare supplemental insurance, prescription drug coverage, Medicare Managed Care, and long-term care insurance.
- HIICAP provides personalized assistance through a team of trained health insurance counselors.

Why are HIICAP Counselors needed?

- Health insurance options can be very confusing to individuals not accustomed to them.
- A trend toward more options and choices has made it even more difficult and complicated.
- Medicare beneficiaries and their caregivers need a source of trusted, unbiased information and personalized assistance to help them make health insurance-related decisions.

How do I become a HIICAP Counselor?

- Fill out a simple application and meet with a HIICAP representative to talk about the Program.
- Attend a free training program that covers the basics and results in certification.
- Shadow with experienced counselors to gain experience.
- All counselors can provide basic information about Medicare, supplemental insurance, Medicare managed care, and prescription drug coverage for Medicare beneficiaries.
- Some counselors choose to specialize in claims and appeals, and/or long-term care insurance.

Once I become a HIICAP Counselor, what will my responsibilities be?

- Attend monthly training meetings where you will receive updated information and have a chance to interact with other HIICAP Counselors.
- Attend occasional regional training programs (Typically one day held in the fall).
- Indicate a minimum of 4 hours/monthly (during normal office hours 9:00-4:30) when you would be available for 1 hour counseling sessions.
- Keep accurate records using the tools provided.
- Make a commitment to volunteer with the HIICAP program for at least one year.

What are the basic rules that I must follow as a HIICAP Counselor?

- Remain unbiased. In other words, you may decide on the best option for you, but your role with HIICAP is to provide information on all the options to help your clients arrive at what is best for them.
- Respect the confidentiality of your clients.
- Remember that it's preferable to say "I don't know, but I'll find out" when you encounter questions you cannot answer with certainty.
- Come forward with potential conflicts of interest that might arise.

Once I become a HIICAP Counselor, what kind of support will I get?

- Becoming a volunteer HIICAP Counselor is like joining a team. The HIICAP Coordinator, other agency staff, and your fellow volunteers will be available to answer your questions and respond to any concerns.
- When you first begin counseling, we recommend that you choose days/times when other counselors and/or staff are available to step in and help out if needed.
 - **Call (518) 270-2768 today to find out how you can become a volunteer HIICAP Counselor!**