

Medicare Minute Script – April 2024

Medicare for Federal Employees and Retirees

Point 1: Understand Federal Employee Health Benefits, or FEHB.

FEHB plans cover current and retired government employees. They're administered by the Office of Personnel Management. FEHB plans can be either Health Maintenance Organizations, also called HMOs, or Fee-for-service plans, also called FFS plans. HMOs have networks of providers, and you usually must see in-network providers to be sure services are covered. In an HMO, your out-of-pocket costs may be lower than in other plan types. FFS plans allow you to see any medical provider, but you may have higher costs.

Point 2: Consider how FEHB affects your Medicare enrollment decisions.

When you become Medicare-eligible, you have a few options.

- One, you can keep FEHB and enroll in Medicare Parts A and B. The two will work together to cover your health care costs, but you will owe premiums for both.
- Two, you can disenroll from your FEHB coverage and enroll in Medicare Parts A and B. Note that you might not be able to enroll in FEHB again in the future if you change your mind.
- Or three, you can keep FEHB and turn down Medicare. If you choose this option, you may still want to enroll in Part A, which is usually premium-free, and only turn down Medicare Part B. Unlike other retiree insurance, FEHB retiree coverage will remain your primary coverage if you don't enroll in Medicare. Therefore, in any of these cases, you will have primary coverage.

Whether to enroll in Part B or use FEHB as primary coverage is a personal decision, based on your individual circumstances. You should look at the costs and benefits of each insurance plan and make the choice that's best for you. Questions to consider include:

- Which forms of insurance do your providers take?
- Which kind of services do you use regularly?
- And which coverage offers the flexibility you need?

If you decide to enroll in Part B, you should do so within eight months after you no longer have FEHB coverage from current employment, since you will qualify for a Special Enrollment Period to enroll in Medicare. Note that your options are different if you're a U.S. Postal Service employee, retiree, or qualifying family member. Starting in 2025, these employees and retirees will be transitioned from FEHB to Postal Service Health Benefits. You must have Medicare to keep these health benefits.

Point 3: Choose how to best get prescription drug coverage.

FEHB prescription drug coverage is creditable for Medicare-eligible retirees. This means that it's as good as or better than Medicare's prescription drug benefit, called Part D. If you're enrolled in FEHB, you can delay Part D enrollment without having a late enrollment penalty.

Be sure to compare the costs and benefits of your FEHB plan and Part D to decide which best suits your needs. You may want to keep FEHB drug coverage if the plan covers more of your drugs with fewer coverage restrictions than Part D plans available in your area. However, if you're eligible for Extra Help, you should consider enrolling in Part D. Extra Help lowers your Medicare drug costs, and the copays under Part D and Extra Help are typically lower than the copays under FEHB. If you enroll in both Part D and FEHB drug coverage, Part D is typically the primary payer for your prescription drugs. Note that FEHB drug coverage

cannot be suspended separately from FEHB health coverage. If you want to keep your FEHB health coverage, you must keep drug coverage, even if you enroll in Part D.

Point 4: Identify billing errors.

Doctors and their billing departments can make errors or honest mistakes when billing. You can spot these errors by reading your Medicare statements and comparing them to your own records. The Senior Medicare Patrol, or SMP, offers My Health Care Trackers for this purpose. If something doesn't seem right, call your provider. For example, you may see that your provider billed Medicare for an office visit on a day when you did not see them. Or, you may see that your provider billed you for a service that seems different than what you actually received. If they made a billing error, they should correct it. If your provider does not fix the error, or if you notice a pattern or errors, contact your local SMP. Your SMP can help you identify Medicare fraud, errors, or abuse, and help you report it to the correct authorities.

Take Action:

1. **Contact the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM)** if you're a federal employee or retiree and want to learn about FEHB. Call 317-212-0454 or visit www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance.
2. **Contact your State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP)** to discuss your enrollment options with a Medicare counselor.
3. **Contact the United States Postal Service (USPS)** if you are a USPS employee, retiree, or eligible family member and need more information on PSHB. You can call 833-712-7742. Current employees can visit www.lightblue.usps.gov and retirees can visit www.keepingposted.org.
4. **Contact your Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP)** if you have experienced potential Medicare fraud, errors, or abuse.

Local SHIP Contact Information	Local SMP Contact Information
SHIP toll-free: 800-247-4422 SHIP email: IdahoSHIBA@doi.idaho.gov SHIP website: SHIBA.Idaho.gov	SMP toll-free: 800-247-4422 SMP email: IdahoSHIBA@doi.idaho.gov SMP website: aging.idaho.gov/stay-safe/senior-medicare-patrol-fraud-prevention
To find a SHIP in another state: Call 877-839-2675 and say "Medicare" when prompted, or visit www.shiphelp.org .	To find an SMP in another state: Call 877-808-2468 or visit www.smpresource.org .
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