



# Sweetwater Reporter

DEDICATED TO PROUDLY DELIVERING LOCAL NEWS SINCE 1881

Monday, November 22, 2010

[www.sweetwaterreporter.com](http://www.sweetwaterreporter.com)

Vol. 113, Issue 007 ■ 50 cents

## Seniors

Continued from page 1

### Medicare annual enrollment alert: What seniors with chronic illnesses should know

BY DANA FRANKS

If you or your loved one is a senior diagnosed with one or more chronic illnesses — such as diabetes and heart failure — you should inquire with your state health insurance counseling program about eligibility to receive assistance from a Medicare Special Needs Plan — or SNP. With a shorter Medicare enrollment season this year, now is the time to learn more about how these unique programs can help.

With the rising prevalence of chronic conditions among seniors in Nolan County, at least 40% are eligible to receive assistance from these programs. Unfortunately, the majority of Texas seniors with chronic illnesses are not enrolled and receiving support from chronic condition Special Needs Plans designed specifically for their unique health care needs.

Why? Simple: SNPs are relatively a new addition to

• See SENIORS page 3



**Chronic condition Special Needs Plans help prevent such complications by providing unique services such as in-home assessments to support continued health and coordinating care across the spectrum of services and providers, improving quality of life for chronically ill seniors.**

Medicare and many people don't know that they even exist.

These plans focus on the overall care of seniors living with one or more chronic illnesses, offering customized care and support to those who need it the most. Many plans employ nurses to help coordinate care across the numerous visits to doctors, specialists and pharmacists that are typical among those with chronic health conditions.

Having diabetes or heart failure requires this kind of specialized care. These illnesses, if not treated properly, can lead to serious complications and hospitalizations.

Chronic condition Special Needs Plans help prevent such complications by providing unique services such as in-home assessments to support continued health and coordinating care across the spectrum of services and providers, improving quality of life for chronically ill seniors.

Those with both Medicare and Medicaid coverage may also benefit from Special Needs Plans, as many of these individuals have complex health and social support needs which are supported by the free services plans provide.

With a shortened enrollment season, seniors and their caregivers must quickly analyze, compare and select their 2011 coverage — there's bound to be confusion. However, Texas seniors should know that if they or someone they know is diagnosed with a chronic illness, there are plans available that can help them manage their health.

*Dana Franks is the West Texas Community Outreach Manager for Care Improvement Plus, one of the largest Special Needs Plans in Texas. To learn more about Special Needs Plans, contact Medicare at 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) or visit [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov). For information about Care Improvement Plus, call 1-866-727-6646 or visit <http://www.careimprovementplus.com>.*