



LOCAL HELP FOR PEOPLE WITH MEDICARE

# CHOICES Volunteer Volunteer Risk & Program Management (VRPM) Handbook

This publication/project is supported by the CT State Unit on Aging with funding, in whole or in part, through a grant from the Administration for Community Living”

**Table of Contents**

SHIP Background..... [3]  
National SHIP Mission, Vision, Strategic Themes & Goals..... [4]  
What is CHOICES/SHIP? ..... [5]  
Contact Information..... [6]  
Abbreviations and Acronyms ..... [7]  
CHOICES Volunteer Risk & Program Management Policy Implementation ..... [9]  
Team Member Roles..... [11]  
Rights and Responsibilities..... [13]  
Orientation, Training, & Certification ..... [16]  
Insurance ..... [18]  
Performance Management ..... [19]  
Recognition..... [21]  
Volunteer Separation..... [22]  
Volunteers with Disabilities ..... [24]  
Appendix..... [25]

## **SHIP Background**

The State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) was created under Section 4360 of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (OBRA) of 1990 (Public Law 101-508). It is also known as Title 42 of the United States Code, section 1395b-4: Health Insurance Information, Counseling and Assistance Grants. This section of the law authorized the Secretary of Health & Human Services (HHS) to make grants to states to establish and maintain health insurance advisory service programs for Medicare beneficiaries. Grant funds were made available to support information, counseling, and assistance activities relating to Medicare, Medicaid, and other related health insurance options such as: Medicare supplement insurance, long-term care insurance, managed care options, and other health insurance benefit information.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014 transferred the SHIP program from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to the U.S. Administration for Community Living (ACL). The SHIP program was placed under ACL's Center for Integrated Programs, Office of Healthcare Information and Counseling. This office also oversees the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers (MIPPA) program. In 2016, ACL developed a national SHIP mission and vision, which were accompanied by several strategic goals, objectives, and initiatives.

**National SHIP Mission, Vision, Strategic Themes and Goals**

**Mission:** “Our mission is to empower, educate, and assist Medicare-eligible individuals, their families, and caregivers through objective outreach, counseling, and training to make informed health insurance decisions that optimize access to care and benefits.”

**Vision:** “We are the known and trusted community resource for Medicare information.”

**Strategic Themes and Goals:** The national SHIP goals, objectives, and initiatives all fall under four overarching themes:

| Strategic Theme        | Goals  |
|------------------------|--|
| Service Excellence     | 1. Consistently and confidentially provide accurate, objective, and comprehensive information and assistance.<br>2. Promote awareness, knowledge, and visibility of the program. |
| Capacity Building      | 3. Recruit, train and retain a diverse, sufficient, and effective workforce at all levels.   |
| Operational Excellence | 4. Develop and strengthen the program structure and organization, including policies, processes, and procedures, to enable effective and efficient operations.                   |
| Innovation             | 5. Promote adaptable and sustainable processes and activities to position the SHIP for changes in the programmatic landscape.  |

SHIPs operate in all fifty states, Guam, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and the District of Columbia. At the state and local levels, SHIPs rely on hundreds of partnerships with host organizations that include Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) and other aging and disability organizations, to help achieve the program’s goals.

SHIP activities support ACL’s broader goals of promoting increased choice and greater independence among older adults. Program activities also serve to enhance the financial, emotional, physical and mental well-being of Medicare beneficiaries, older adults and persons with disabilities -- thereby increasing their capacity to maintain security and independence in retirement and to make better financial and health care choices.

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### **What is CHOICES/SHIP?**

CHOICES is CT's SHIP. It is Connecticut's program for Health insurance assistance, Outreach, Information and referral, Counseling, Eligibility Screening. The Administration for Community Living (ACL) provides federal SHIP & MIPPA grant funding to the CT State Unit on Aging (SUA) to administer CHOICES. SUA contracts with the five local Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) and the Center for Medicare Advocacy Inc. (CMA) to provide program services. The five CHOICES Regional Coordinators are responsible for recruiting, training, coordinating, and supervising CHOICES staff and volunteers in their local catchment areas. Staff from CMA and the CHOICES Regional Coordinators conducts the CHOICES New Volunteer Training. CMA staff also assist beneficiaries with Medicare appeals and provide technical assistance trainings for CHOICES team members. CHOICES also receives technical assistance, resources, and training from the National SHIP Technical Assistance Center (SHIP TA Center).

CHOICES team members include paid staff, in-kind professionals, and volunteers. Team members may be located in a variety of host organizations like the five AAA's, senior centers, municipal agencies, senior and disabled housing sites, libraries, and more. Team members assist Medicare beneficiaries, their families and caregivers with one on one health insurance counseling, eligibility screenings, and plan comparison assistance. When Medicare beneficiaries cannot act on their own behalf to address problems, team members work with beneficiaries, family, caregivers, and others to address the problems, and if necessary, make referrals to outside organizations that can intervene. Team members also conduct outreach in their communities through group presentations, exhibits at community events, and answering questions at senior/health fairs.

## Contact Information

CHOICES Toll free 1-800-994-9422

### CT State Unit on Aging

55 Farmington Ave, 12<sup>th</sup> Floor, Hartford, CT  
Phone 860-424-5274 or Toll free 866-218-6631

### Agency on Aging of South Central CT (AOASCC)

One Long Wharf Drive, Suite 1L, in New Haven  
Phone 203-785-8533.

AoASCC covers towns and cities within New Haven and Fairfield Counties which are located in the South Central Areas of CT.

### North Central Area Agency on Aging (NCAAA)

151 New Park Ave PO Box 75, Hartford  
Phone 860-724-6443

NCAAA covers towns and cities within Hartford, Tolland, and Litchfield Counties which are located in the North Central Areas of CT.

### Senior Resources Agency on Aging

19 Ohio Ave, Norwich  
Phone 860-887-3561

Senior Resources covers towns and cities within New London, Middlesex, Windham, and Tolland Counties which are located in the Eastern, Middlesex, and Shoreline areas of CT.

### Southwestern CT Agency on Aging (SWCAA)

1000 Lafayette Blvd, Bridgeport  
Phone 203-333-9288

SWCAA covers towns and cities within Fairfield County which are located in the Southwestern areas of CT.

### Western CT Area Agency on Aging (WCAAA)

84 Progress Lane, Waterbury  
Phone 203-757-5449

WCAAA covers towns and cities within New Haven, Litchfield, and Fairfield Counties which are located in the Western areas of CT

### Center for Medicare Advocacy, Inc. (CMA)

PO Box 350, Willimantic  
Phone 860-456-7790 Toll Free 800-262-4414

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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

- ACL:** The Administration for Community Living, an operating division within the federal Department of Health and Human Services with headquarters in Washington, DC and regional offices in ten cities.
- AoA:** The Administration on Aging, an agency within the Administration for Community Living, administers all programs funded by the Older Americans Act.
- AAA:** An Area Agency on Aging is responsible for planning and delivery of services under the Older Americans Act for a geographic region within a state.
- CMA:** The Center for Medicare Advocacy, Inc. has locations in CT and Washington DC. CMA assists SDA by providing Medicare Legal & Educational Assistance through information and referral, training, and appeals to Medicare beneficiaries within the state of CT.
- CMS:** The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) administers the Medicare program and oversees state administration of the Medicaid programs. The Center for Program Integrity (CPI) is a bureau within CMS that works with various contractors to identify potential fraud, waste and abuse in the original, fee-for-service Medicare program. CMS is also responsible for overseeing the Medicare Advantage (Part C) and Medicare Prescription Drug (Part D) programs. An Administrator appointed by the Secretary of HHS heads CMS.
- DSS:** The CT Department of Social Services also known as the State Medicaid Agency administers a number of programs under federal legislation that help older adults, persons with disabilities, and families.
- HHS:** The Department of Health & Human Services is one of two departments within the executive branch of the federal government responsible for administering the Health Care Fraud & Abuse Control (HCFAC) program of which the Medicare Integrity Program (MIP) is a part. The Administration for Community Living (ACL), the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the HHS Office of the Inspector General (OIG) are units within HHS. The Secretary of HHS holds a cabinet-level position.
- SHIP:** The State Health Insurance Assistance Programs provide outreach, education, and counseling services to Medicare beneficiaries, their families, and caregivers. SHIPs assist

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with applying for assistance programs, comparing and choosing health and drug plans, and appealing claims denials.

**SMP:** The Senior Medicare Patrols empower and assist Medicare beneficiaries, their families, and caregivers to protect, detect, and report health care fraud, errors, and abuse through outreach, counseling, and education.



### CHOICES Volunteer Risk and Program Management Policy Implementation

A comprehensive set of risk and program management policies guide the operation of the SHIP volunteer program. The policies resulted from a project that began in 2010 to assess and identify the risks involved in the operation of the SMP volunteer program, and to provide guidance and resources to program managers to help them manage the identified risks. The Volunteer Risk and Program Management (VRPM) project's implementation was completed for SMP at the end of 2014. In 2016, ACL added a requirement for all SHIP agencies to implement VRPM policies by April 1, 2018. The Administration on Aging (AoA) and the Administration for Community Living (ACL) initiated the VRPM project with these factors in mind:

1. Growth of the SMP & SHIP programs
2. Increased awareness about risks related to volunteer involvement, for example, with volunteers who have access to sensitive personal information
3. The need to adapt to a changing environment for volunteering in which volunteers assume responsibility for challenging and responsible tasks
4. Expectations in the courts and public opinion for high standards and greater accountability in volunteer programs

The primary purpose for the VRPM project, and the development of a comprehensive set of risk and program management policies, is to enable SHIP & SMP programs to manage their volunteer programs more safely, effectively, and productively. Safety is a concern for both volunteers and the people—many who are vulnerable seniors—who benefit from the SHIP & SMP program services. The VRPM project also promotes effectiveness by setting a high standard of care in regard to volunteer services. The creation of national standards for this important area of program operations will enhance the program's results.

VRPM policies apply to all state and local organizations, also called "volunteer host organizations," that recruit and manage volunteers to perform CHOICES duties, and to all the CHOICES team members who work under them. The policies were created with true volunteers in mind, meaning those volunteers that do not receive regular compensation for their time and effort. Some of the items within this document are not appropriate for use with CHOICES paid staff or in-kind volunteers and should not be applied to these team members. However, ACL expects that CHOICES will ensure proper training, screening, and supervision is provided to *all* team members. This includes holding all team members accountable for the work that they do. ACL reserves the exclusive right to change any aspect of these volunteer

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policies at any time and to expect adherence to the changed policy by CHOICES, CHOICES team members, and partners who serve CHOICES. In some cases, host organizations may have other policies in place in addition to the VRPM policies. If you find that the different policies are in conflict or are causing confusion, please discuss the problem with your CHOICES Regional Coordinator.

As a CHOICES team member, you have an obligation to know and understand the policies and how they affect you. Your CHOICES Regional Coordinator will refer to the policies as they manage you and the other volunteers in the program. The policies address:

- Definitions of key terms
- Volunteer role classifications and position descriptions
- Risk management and insurance requirements
- Incident reporting and response procedures
- Volunteer rights and responsibilities
- Coordinator of volunteers (CHOICES Regional Coordinator) role
- Screening procedures
- Orientation and training
- Performance management
- Boundaries and ethics, including relationships with beneficiaries
- Confidentiality
- Grievances and complaints
- Recognition
- Information and data security, and
- Much more

This handbook contains information on some of the policies that most interest volunteers such as roles, rights and responsibilities, orientation and training, screening, dismissal, and complaints and grievances. If you would like to see the complete set of CHOICES VRPM policies, ask your CHOICES Regional Coordinator.

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### Team Member Roles

Titles for volunteer positions in the SHIP program are not nationally standardized. The exact number and kind of volunteer roles will be determined by each SHIP to meet their specific volunteer program and community needs. Information about the roles and the responsibilities connected with them are set forth in position descriptions. The CHOICES Regional Coordinator should give you a copy of a position description that describes the purpose, duties, and qualifications for the role(s) in which you have agreed to serve.

CHOICES team member roles include:

- Administrative Support: This role involves such work as copying, filing, data entry, and placing outbound phone calls in support of CHOICES program activity. Administrative support volunteers do not provide counseling, but may schedule appointments and/or group presentations for CHOICES team members who assist the public through counseling and outreach services.

Counselor: This role involves direct confidential health insurance counseling with Medicare beneficiaries, caregivers, and/or family members about their individual situations and may include a review of personal financial and health information in order to conduct Medicare eligibility screenings and plan comparisons, and to assist beneficiaries with applying for or enrolling in Medicare related benefit programs. This role may also involve in-depth, complex interactions with beneficiaries, caregivers, and/or family members who are experiencing issues with obtaining benefits they have already been deemed eligible for. Team members who serve in this role may act on behalf of a beneficiary to correct an error or refer the beneficiary to other agencies.

Open Enrollment Counselor: This role involves assisting Medicare beneficiaries and their caregivers during the annual Medicare Open Enrollment Period. Open Enrollment Counselors provide assistance with plan comparisons and enrollments into Medicare Part D or Medicare Advantage Plans. Counselors may also conduct eligibility screenings and provide application assistance for other Medicare related benefit programs. Team members who serve in this role may act on behalf of a beneficiary to correct an error or refer the beneficiary to other agencies.

Outreach Volunteer: This role involves transporting and disseminating CHOICES educational and informational materials to sites and events, and may include presenting prepared copy or performing scripted activities for small groups. This role may also involve staffing information kiosks or exhibits at events such as health fairs and enrollment events. Outreach volunteers who staff exhibits or enrollment events provide general information about the program to the public and answer basic questions, but do not engage in counseling beneficiaries about their personal information or situations.

- Presenter: This role involves giving substantive presentations to small and large groups, with the opportunity for interaction with the audience during time set aside for Q & A

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and discussion. Volunteers who provide presentations do not provide counseling, but may refer audience members to CHOICES team members who provide health insurance counseling to beneficiaries.

CHOICES team member roles are considered to be “positions of trust.” This means that the roles involve access to beneficiaries or other vulnerable people, personal or confidential information. Positions of trust are subject to various screening procedures. If you decide to transfer from one role to another, please keep in mind that you may be required to undergo a more intensive screening process to qualify for placement in the new role.

CHOICES asks team members to confine their activities to those tasks and responsibilities described in the position description for their specific role(s). Each volunteer role has responsibilities as well as limits to those responsibilities. A team member who is trained to make group presentations, for example, should not handle counseling and referrals unless she or he formally qualified for that role after completing any required screening procedures and training. For more details about the scopes of responsibility in the roles, see the ***Volunteer Role Descriptions*** in the Appendix.

### Rights and Responsibilities

CHOICES team members have certain rights and responsibilities that are good to keep in mind during the course of your volunteer service. Because the program's leadership sees volunteers as a valuable resource to the program and the communities it serves, volunteers have rights, for example, to meaningful work, support, and recognition for the work they do.

At the same time, CHOICES expects team members to perform their duties to the best of their abilities, to comply with the program's volunteer policies, and to remain loyal to the program's values, goals, and procedures. Team members serve at the sole discretion of CHOICES, and agree that CHOICES may decide to end a volunteer's relationship with the program or to change the nature of the volunteer's assignment when appropriate.

As a CHOICES team member, you have a right to:

#### **CHOICES volunteers, have a right to:**

- Meaningful work assignments
- A role description
- Recognition for their contributions
- Treatment as an equal among their team members/co-workers
- A safe work environment
- A respectful work environment
- Freedom from discrimination
- Freedom from harassment
- Orientation and training
- Effective supervision
- Constructive, regular feedback about their work
- A copy of their background & criminal record check report, upon request
- File grievances and appeal resulting decisions
- Receive all the pertinent information they need to perform their work assignments
- Know the standards of performance that apply to the work they do
- Refuse any tasks or work assignments, especially when the assignment requires them to do something for which they have not been trained
- Receive clear information about what TO do as well as what NOT to do, so that they know the boundaries for their role
- Secure and confidential records in their personnel files
- Full access to their personnel file, upon request
  - a. Resign from their volunteer service at any time
  - b. Provide the program with feedback about their experience as a volunteer at any time, including, but not limited to, their retirement from service with the program
  - c. Notify their CHOICES Regional Coordinator if their contact information has changed

#### **CHOICES volunteers, have a responsibility to:**

- Adhere to VRPM policies
- Maintain their CHOICES certification

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- Complete required training programs, including continuing education programs
- Take & pass the CHOICES examination
- Report CHOICES performance activities into the SHIP National Performance Reporting database
- Provide services responsibly and objectively, regardless of the background or characteristics of the beneficiaries they serve
- Represent the program only to the extent that their role specifically authorizes
- Work within the parameters and boundaries set by the program
- Not present themselves as a spokesperson for the program unless specifically authorized by their CHOICES Regional Coordinator to do so
- Not promote religious or political beliefs or personal business dealings during their volunteer work hours
- Not promote specific services, providers, plans or products while conducting program work
- Inform their CHOICES Regional Coordinator of any conflicts of interest that may arise after placement in their volunteer position
- Report any abuse (physical/emotional abuse, exploitation, neglect) that they may witness involving the program's beneficiaries or clients
- Report accidents, injuries, and errors that they become involved in or witness while conducting program work
- Be on time or give advance notice if they must be absent
- Protect the confidentiality of the program's beneficiaries and/or clients
- Follow procedures to ensure the security of clients' electronic and hard copy data
- Tell the CHOICES Regional Coordinator about changes in your health that might adversely affect their work

The list above shows many, but not all, of the rights and responsibilities for CHOICES team members. For the specific policy language on these and other rights and responsibilities, see ***Related Volunteer Risk and Program Management (VRPM) Policies*** in the Appendix.

Here are some examples that we hope will help clarify some of these responsibilities.

**Representing CHOICES-** Team members who are trained to make group presentations are authorized to discuss, and answer questions about, approved CHOICES programs. In that limited capacity, they are free to identify themselves as being affiliated with CHOICES. They should not, however, hold themselves out as public spokespersons for the program in connection with media inquiries or questions related to official policy positions.

As a representative of the programs, you are expected to maintain professional standards in all things, including appearance, use of appropriate language, and conduct.

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**Reporting Conflicts of Interest** One concern for CHOICES is the appearance of an implied endorsement for a team member who is known to the community for his or her business and/or political interests. After discussing the circumstances with the team member, a CHOICES Regional Coordinator may decide that the person who is engaged in health care sales, or who is running for a seat on the city council, is unsuited for CHOICES because of the danger of blurring the lines between the person's volunteer activity and his or her business or personal interest. Please bring any business, political, or personal activity that arises, that may conflict with the mission and goals of the CHOICES program, to your CHOICES Regional Coordinator's attention.

**Reporting Incidents** If you are involved in an accident, suffer an injury, experience harassment, or witness abuse of a beneficiary while you are on duty as a CHOICES team member, you have a responsibility to report the incident to your supervisor or CHOICES Regional Coordinator. Complete and submit an incident reporting form (see Appendix) as soon as possible.

**Volunteers Who Drive** If your volunteer position involves driving a motor vehicle on behalf of the CHOICES program, you have additional responsibilities to:

- Abide by traffic laws, such as speed limit, seat belt, and cell phone laws, as you carry out your volunteer duties
- Carry liability insurance on your vehicle
- Notify your CHOICES Regional Coordinator if your insurance coverage lapses
- Notify your CHOICES Regional Coordinator if your driver's license expires or receives restrictions that limit your ability to carry out your volunteer duties
- Sign the ***CHOICES Driver's License and Insurance Coverage Certification Form***

For more information, see the ***Insurance*** section of this document.

**Orientation, Training, & Certification**

Orientation and training are essential to developing the knowledge and skills that CHOICES team members need to serve the people of their communities effectively. A half day orientation session is provided as a part of the CHOICES New Volunteer Training. Its aim is to explain, among other topics, the:

- d. Purpose and values of the SHIP
- e. Nature and operation of the program or activity in which the volunteer will participate
- f. Purpose, duties, and requirements of the role the volunteer is accepting

**CHOICES Training and Certification**

Each volunteer’s term of service runs concurrent with the SHIP grant Period (April-March) and lasts up to three years. Terms end in March of the third service year regardless of start date or approved leave(s) of absence. CHOICES has established minimum training and certification requirements for new and existing team members. Prior to each term of service, CHOICES Regional Coordinators send volunteers who meet the minimum certification requirements an **Acceptance & Welcome Letter**. CHOICES New Volunteer Training topics include, but are not limited to, Medicare, Medicaid, Medicare Supplement (Medigap), Medicare Savings Program, Medicare Low Income Subsidy/Extra Help, Medicare Plan Finder, Long Term Care Insurance, Aging & Disability Information & Referral Assistance, and other benefit programs that help Medicare beneficiaries. CHOICES team members may also receive on-the-job training through supervision, coaching, guidance, and feedback. In addition, CHOICES Regional Coordinators notify team members about SHIP and Medicare related trainings and/or updates to empower volunteer to build their skills while serving with CHOICES. The chart below shows the various steps volunteers must successfully complete in order to maintain their CHOICES certification:

| <b>Steps:</b>                                | <b>Actions:</b>   |
|--|---|
| Application & Screening                      | Applicants complete and submit CHOICES application packet to AAA. CHOICES Regional Coordinator conducts necessary screenings.   |
| Initial Interview                            | CHOICES Regional Coordinators conduct in-person or phone interview with new applicants. Notices are sent to anyone who is not accepted into CHOICES New Volunteer Training. |
| Orientation (CHOICES New Volunteer Training) | CHOICES Regional Coordinators conduct half day in-person orientation and safety training with all new applicants who are accepted to  |

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|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | participate in training.   |
| Training (CHOICES New Volunteer Training, CHOICES Update Training, & CHOICES Technical Assistance Trainings) | <p>New applicants participate in a 5 day CHOICES New Volunteer Training conducted by CHOICES Regional Coordinators and staff from CMA.</p> <p>After becoming a CHOICES volunteer, all volunteers participate in two CHOICES Update or Technical Assistance Trainings each year, at least one training must include the annual mandatory Open Enrollment Training.</p>    |
| CHOICES Examinations (New & recertification exams) & CHOICES Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)               | <p>After completion of the CHOICES New Volunteer Training, participants have one month to take and pass the CHOICES exam and sign the CHOICES MOU.</p> <p>Prior to beginning a new term of service, volunteers must take and pass the CHOICES recertification exam and sign the CHOICES MOU. Recertification exams are conducted in January of each third term year.</p> |
| Probation Period (new volunteers)  | All new CHOICES team members are placed on probation for a period of three months after their initial training is complete; they have passed the CHOICES exam; they have been placed into a role; and at a site location.  |
| Reporting Performance Activity   | CHOICES team members are expected to be registered and to report performance activity data (client contacts & public and media contacts) during their probation period and throughout their term(s) of service.  |

## Insurance

The AAA may provide liability and accident insurance for volunteers who are engaged in CHOICES business. You should discuss this with your CHOICES Regional Coordinator and determine how the coverage coordinates with your other insurance plans. CHOICES volunteers who drive their own vehicles for CHOICES business are to carry automobile liability insurance policies at their own expense. In the event of an accident or damage while a volunteer is driving her or his own vehicle for CHOICES work, the volunteer's own automobile insurance coverage comes into play. We encourage you to consult your own insurance agent about your CHOICES driving activities and to make sure that your coverage provides adequate protection.

If you accept a volunteer role that involves driving your own vehicle, the CHOICES Regional Coordinator will require you to sign the ***CHOICES Driver's License and Insurance Coverage Certification Form***, which will be added to your personnel file. Your CHOICES Regional Coordinator will require you to sign the form prior to each new term of service. If your automobile insurance coverage lapses or your license is no longer valid, please notify your CHOICES Regional Coordinator immediately so that she or he can adjust work assignments as needed.

### Performance Management

The CHOICES program's success is measured in terms of outcomes related to assisting individual beneficiaries through one on one health insurance counseling sessions and public outreach/education about CHOICES, Medicare, and other programs related to Medicare. A key expectation in CHOICES volunteer program management is that supervisors (CHOICES Regional Coordinators) will provide the support volunteers need to successfully achieve the program's education and assistance goals. The CHOICES Regional Coordinator is the assigned supervisor for all unpaid volunteers, regardless of the volunteer's assigned placement location. A constructive and success-oriented performance management system is in place to guide the CHOICES Regional Coordinators as they provide supervision that encourages productive and satisfying team member involvement in the CHOICES program.

**CHOICES Performance Management System** The performance management system has three components: supervision, performance evaluation, and corrective action. Each component includes a range of techniques that CHOICES Regional Coordinators can use to promote high performance. The guiding principle of performance management is to match the type and extent of supervisory intervention to the nature of a volunteer's responsibilities and capacity. It provides several avenues to demonstrate support and to acknowledge excellence. Here are some key points about the system's three components:

**Supervision** CHOICES has an obligation to provide supervision and support for the program's volunteers. This means that as supervisors, the CHOICES Regional Coordinators have a responsibility to manage the work that volunteers do, and to determine the kind of guidance and support that each volunteer needs. The supervision that you receive as a CHOICES volunteer should reflect the principle of positive, constructive, and success-oriented guidance that underpins the SHIP volunteer performance management system. You should expect to receive feedback, consultation, information, and meaningful assignments from your CHOICES Regional Coordinators.

**Performance Evaluation** Volunteers in the CHOICES program receive periodic evaluation of their work. In May of each year, the CHOICES Regional Coordinator shall provide all active CHOICES team members with written notification of their annual performance outcomes (April-March). Formal performance evaluations are conducted in February of every third term year, prior to beginning a new term of service. This is a more formal process than one finds in a supervisor's day-to-day feedback and provides a more detailed assessment of each volunteer's performance, on-the-job behavior, achievements, and areas for improvement. This process gives you and your CHOICES Regional Coordinator an opportunity to exchange feedback, ideas, and suggestions.

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Your CHOICES Regional Coordinator will also use the performance evaluation process to update your personnel file, including changes in your volunteer role, contact information, and the like. She or he will document the substance of the performance evaluation and any improvement plans to which you mutually agree and place them in your file.

**Corrective Action** CHOICES Regional Coordinators may take corrective action when a volunteer's behavior is serious enough to require intervention, and when its continuation or repetition is unacceptable. The CHOICES corrective action process is progressive in that it is oriented toward success rather than focused on failure, and that the degree of intervention matches the nature of the performance or behavior issue, becoming more serious as the unacceptability of the behavior increases or the volunteer's inability to resolve the problem continues.

Corrective action in the CHOICES program includes a range of interventions that aim to help volunteers make needed improvements when their performance and/or behavior do not meet expectations. Interventions may include additional training, coaching, adjustment of volunteer duties, or reassignment to a different role. In more serious cases, interventions may involve formal disciplinary actions such as warnings, suspensions, and dismissal. If you would like to learn more about the CHOICES' corrective action process, ask your CHOICES Regional Coordinator. For information on dismissals, see the ***Volunteer Separation*** section of this document.

**Grievances and Appeals** A volunteer who has a complaint about, or grievance with, staff, other volunteers, beneficiaries, or partner organizations should communicate the concern to her or his CHOICES Regional Coordinator. If the complaint or grievance involves the volunteer's own CHOICES Regional Coordinator, she or he should convey the concern to the CHOICES Regional Coordinator's immediate supervisor and/or the CHOICES Statewide Coordinator.

CHOICES also has an appeals procedure through which a volunteer can request review of a formal corrective action decision, including dismissal. If you have a complaint or grievance, ask your CHOICES Regional Coordinator for information on filing it.

**Survey** CHOICES conducts annual surveys with all team members. Please participate and answer the questions candidly. Your responses will help the CHOICES Statewide & Regional Coordinators identify the CHOICES program's strengths and weaknesses, and to make improvements where needed. We encourage your participation. See the ***CHOICES Annual Survey*** in the Appendix.

## Recognition

CHOICES greatly appreciates the many and varied contributions of its team members to the program's success. CHOICES Regional Coordinators recognize and reward team member service both formally and informally. Informal recognition may take the form of feedback on the results of a volunteer's work, a thank you note, a birthday card, or an invitation to participate in the decision-making for a project or activity.

CHOICES strives to recognize volunteers for all types of productive service, and not simply for the number of hours they work. Each AAA provides an annual Volunteer Recognition event for all team members in their catchment area.

### Volunteer Separation

**Resignation** Team members may resign voluntarily from their service with the CHOICES program at any time. If you intend to resign, please notify your CHOICES Regional Coordinator as soon as possible.

**Discipline & Dismissal** CHOICES accepts team members with the understanding that the volunteers serve at the sole discretion of CHOICES. Team members who do not follow the rules, policies, and procedures of the CHOICES program, or who repeatedly fail to perform an assignment satisfactorily despite supervisory support and appropriate interventions, are subject to disciplinary action or dismissal. Involuntary dismissal is typically a last resort, used only when other appropriate steps have been taken. Ideally, the supervisory staff will discuss with a volunteer in advance the reasons for a possible dismissal if other corrective actions do not resolve the problem within a reasonable time frame.

Possible grounds for dismissal are listed below. The list illustrates the range of reasons for dismissal and is not intended to be comprehensive. Grounds for dismissal include:

- g. Gross misconduct
- h. Serious misjudgment that may undermine trust in the volunteer or cause harm to others
- i. Insubordination, including failure or unwillingness to perform essential responsibilities in the volunteer's role or to accept direction from supervisory staff
- j. Being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs while on volunteer duty or representing CHOICES
- k. Theft or other illegal acts
- l. Unauthorized use or misuse of CHOICES equipment or materials
- m. Harm, abuse, harassment or mistreatment of beneficiaries, co-workers, or other persons
- n. Serious and repeated failure to follow CHOICES policies and procedures
- o. Inability to meet physical, cognitive, or emotional standards of performance
- p. Repeated failure to perform assigned duties satisfactorily
- q. Unresolvable conflict of interest
- r. Serious breach of boundaries

**Immediate Dismissal and Suspension** Some behaviors are so unacceptable that, upon verification, they constitute grounds for immediate dismissal. If a question exists about the

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unacceptable behavior, CHOICES will temporarily suspend the volunteer from service pending the results of an investigation.

Grounds for immediate dismissal include:

- s. Fraud, theft, or abuse in connection with CHOICES volunteer service
- t. Serious illegal act
- u. Gross negligence causing bodily harm in connection with CHOICES volunteer service
- v. Breach of confidentiality
- w. Reporting for volunteer service under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- x. Using violence in the workplace

## **Volunteers with Disabilities**

CHOICES values the service of volunteers with disabilities. CHOICES Regional Coordinators strive to include volunteers with disabilities in all facets of the program to the extent that an individual's physical capacity allows, and to ensure access to all CHOICES program facilities. When requested, the program will make reasonable accommodations to meet the special needs of team members with disabilities. Contact your CHOICES Regional Coordinator to request a special accommodation.



## Appendix

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**Related VRPM Policies**

Full details of the policies listed below may be found in the CT SMP & CHOICES Volunteer Risk & Program Management Policy manual.

**1.3 Compliance.**

**1.4 Volunteer Role Classifications.**

**2.1 Risk Assessment.**

**2.2 Insurance.**

**2.3 Automobile insurance coverage.**

**2.4 Safety Training.**

**2.9 Incident Response.**

**3.2 Community representatives.**

**3.5 Volunteer rights and responsibilities.**

**3.6 Volunteer program management system.**

**3.7 Coordinator of volunteers.**

**3.8 Resources for volunteer support and involvement.**

**3.9 Maintenance of records.**

**3.12 Volunteer role development.**

**3.14 Role descriptions.**

**3.15 Standards of performance.**

**3.19 Length of service.**

**3.20 Leaves of absence.**

**3.21 Recruitment.**

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**3.22 Non-Discrimination.**

**3.24 Advertisement of volunteer opportunities.**

**3.26 Wait list.**

**3.30 Right of refusal.**

**3.31 Full disclosure of process and volunteer consent.**

**3.33 Interviews.**

**3.34 Availability of suitable volunteer roles.**

**3.35 Conflict of interest.**

**3.41 Probationary period.**

**3.44 Incomplete or false information.**

**3.45 New screening standards for current volunteers.**

**3.46 Reconfirmation of screening.**

**3.48 Screening of previous volunteers.**

**3.49 Revisions to the screening process.**

**3.54 Re-assignment.**

**3.55 Orientation.**

**3.56 Training.**

- 3.57 Credit for related training.**
- 3.58 Demonstrating qualifications.**
- 3.59 On-the-job training.**
- 3.62 Continuing education.**
- 3.64 Components.**
- 3.65 Supervisor’s role.**
- 3.66 Notice of performance management system.**
- 3.68 The nature of supervision and support.**
- 3.72 Lines of communication.**
- 3.73 Evaluation of performance.**
- 3.74 Documenting performance.**
- 3.76 Progressive Corrective Action.**
- 3.77 Dismissal of a volunteer.**
- 3.78 Immediate dismissal.**
- 3.79 Notice of departure of volunteer.**
- 3.80 Reassignment of work and cessation of work relationships.**
- 3.81 Performance management review and appeals procedures.**
- 3.82 Grievance/complaint procedure.**
- 3.83 Investigation of outside complaints.**
- 3.84 Resignation.**
- 3.87 Clarification of meaning.**
- 3.88 Volunteer conduct.**
- 3.91 Representation of the SHIP.**
- 3.93 Use of SHIP affiliation.**
- 3.94 Confidentiality.**
- 3.96 Recording of volunteer time and activity.**
- 3.99 Drugs and alcohol.**
- 3.103 Access to SHIP/SMP property and materials**
- 3.107 Cultural sensitivity.**
- 3.109 Recognition.**
- 3.110 Informal recognition.**
- 3.112 Feedback on results.**
- 3.117 Responsibilities of supervisors of volunteers.**
- 3.120 Volunteer management training for members of staff.**
- 4.1 Information procedures.**
- 4.4 SHIP reporting software use.**

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## Team Member Role Descriptions

### Administrative Support

#### **Purpose**

Help accomplish the SHIP mission by providing administrative support to CHOICES paid staff and volunteers.

The SHIP mission is to empower, educate, and assist Medicare-eligible individuals, their families, and caregivers through objective outreach, counseling, and training to make informed health insurance decisions that optimize access to care and benefits.

#### **Suggested Activities**

CHOICES volunteers who provide administrative support handle tasks such as data entry, copying, general filing, and making phone calls in support of CHOICES activities, for example, locating and reserving training space, confirming participant attendance, etc. Volunteers who provide administrative support may perform other tasks as mutually agreed, including:

- Word processing

- Scheduling presentations, appointments, and other outreach activities

- Collating paperwork

- Entering team member or beneficiary data into the national SHIP performance reporting database or the Medicare Plan Finder

- Internet searches

- Fulfilling requests for information and materials

- Handling mail and correspondence

#### **Limitations**

Volunteers who provide administrative support do not field questions from the public. Instead they defer requests for information and assistance to paid staff or volunteers who are qualified to handle inquiries, answer questions, and/or provide one-on-one counseling services.

#### **Performance Measures & Standards**

This activity is measured by timely and accurate completion of assigned tasks, submitting performance activity reports into the SHIP National Performance Reporting database, participation in CHOICES trainings, taking & passing CHOICES exams, and signing the CHOICES

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Memorandum of Understanding. The CHOICES Regional Coordinator confers with the volunteer at the beginning of the assignment and at periodic check-in meetings/reviews to determine whether the team member is helping CHOICES fulfill its scope of work.

### Qualifications

- Good oral and written communication skills
- Computer literacy, including familiarity with internet and Microsoft Word, Excel, & Outlook
- Ability to operate office equipment
- Ability to work and get along well with others from diverse backgrounds

### Time Commitment

CHOICES volunteers have flexible schedules. The local CHOICES Regional Coordinator works with each volunteer who provides administrative support to determine the number of hours the volunteer works each month, and to schedule the work accordingly. Because of the training CHOICES volunteers receive, they are asked to commit to a minimum of one 3 year term of service.

### Location

CHOICES volunteers who assist with administration, oftentimes, work directly with the CHOICES Regional Coordinator, CHOICES staff at the AAA office, or other assigned volunteer host organizations.

### Supervision

Volunteers report to their local CHOICES Regional Coordinator.

### Benefits

Volunteers who provide administrative support receive additional training on office procedures and the safe use of equipment. All CHOICES team members have the satisfaction of participating in a national effort to educate Medicare beneficiaries, their caregivers, and the general public about CHOICES/SHIP, Medicare, and related health insurance programs and benefits. They are also invited to attend an annual volunteer appreciation event and receive recognition for their contributions to the program.

### Counselor

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## **Purpose**

Help accomplish the SHIP mission by providing individual health insurance counseling.

The SHIP mission is to empower, educate, and assist Medicare-eligible individuals, their families, and caregivers through objective outreach, counseling, and training to make informed health insurance decisions that optimize access to care and benefits.

## **Suggested Activities**

CHOICES counselors confidentially discuss individual situations with Medicare-eligible beneficiaries and/or their caregivers and may conduct eligibility screenings, provide plan comparisons for available Medicare prescription drug plans, provide application assistance for health insurance benefit programs, review beneficiary's related financial and health documents, and assist with Open Enrollment events. Counselors also educate beneficiaries about other state and federal health insurance programs and benefits. Counselors listen carefully to the beneficiary's or caregiver's account of a situation and determine whether to:

- Share information with, or provide an explanation to, the beneficiary or caregiver and provide follow up, as needed;

- Assess and refer the beneficiary to another more applicable organization for assistance (such as the Department of Social Services, Social Security Administration, SMP, 1-800-Medicare, etc.);

- Assess and refer the beneficiary or caregiver to the CHOICES Regional Coordinator or CHOICES staff for additional assistance, like help with non-Medicare related benefit programs and/or researching Medicare manuals.

When a counselor decides to send a beneficiary's case to CHOICES staff, the counselor may receive and confidentially transmit the beneficiary's documents to that person with the individual's confidentiality and data security procedures in mind. Counselors provide their services in person or by telephone. Counseling may take place at locations such as senior centers, CHOICES or Medicare education events, libraries, etc.

## **Limitations**

Some issues may take longer to resolve than others or require additional sessions. Counselors may not hold on to beneficiary's information. They must return all documents to each beneficiary or their authorized representative after each individual counseling session. In instances where beneficiaries need non-Medicare related assistance, counselors should refer the beneficiary to the CHOICES Regional Coordinator or CHOICES staff for further assistance.

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## **Performance Measures & Standards**

This activity is measured by the number of counseling sessions reported into the SHIP National Performance Reporting Database and, if available, any client or volunteer feedback. In addition to reporting, all team members are required to participate in CHOICES trainings, take & pass CHOICES exams, and sign the CHOICES Memorandum of Understanding in order to maintain CHOICES certification. The CHOICES Regional Coordinator has frequent contact with counselors to determine the number of counseling sessions or enrollment events the team member participated in to help CHOICES fulfill its scope of work.

## **Qualifications**

- Good oral communication skills

- Active listening skills

- Ability and willingness to learn and share information related to Medicare and related programs

- Ability to explain Medicare coverage and program integrity rules and procedures in terms that beneficiaries can understand

- Ability to work independently

- Ability to work well with others from diverse backgrounds

- Ability to request assistance as needed, e.g. knowing when to refer complex issues and/or when the answer to a question is not known by the team member

- Computer literacy, including the ability to use the internet and online reporting programs

## **Time Commitment**

CHOICES volunteer schedules are flexible. The local CHOICES Regional Coordinator works with each volunteer to determine the number of hours the volunteer works each month, and to schedule assignments accordingly. Because of the training CHOICES counselors receive, they are asked to commit to a minimum of one 3 year term of service.

## **Location**

CHOICES volunteers work at the offices of the local volunteer host organization (VHO) located in the AAA catchment area and at sites in the community where activities, such as CHOICES enrollment events, take place.

## **Supervision**

CHOICES volunteers who provide counseling report to their local CHOICES Regional Coordinator.

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## **Benefits**

CHOICES counselors receive additional training on counseling skills, available local service providers and triage procedures. CHOICES counselors receive training on the basics of Medicare and related health insurance programs and benefits. All CHOICES team members have the satisfaction of participating in a national effort to educate Medicare beneficiaries, their caregivers, and the general public about CHOICES/SHIP, Medicare, and related health insurance programs. They are also invited to attend an annual volunteer appreciation event and receive recognition for their contributions to the program.



## Open Enrollment Counselor

### **Purpose**

Help accomplish the SHIP mission by providing individual health insurance counseling during the annual Medicare Open Enrollment Period.

The SHIP mission is to empower, educate, and assist Medicare-eligible individuals, their families, and caregivers through objective outreach, counseling, and training to make informed health insurance decisions that optimize access to care and benefits.

### **Suggested Activities**

CHOICES Open Enrollment counselors confidentially assist Medicare-eligible beneficiaries and/or their caregivers by providing plan comparisons and enrollment assistance for available Medicare Part D prescription drug plans and Medicare Advantage plans. They may also review beneficiary's related financial and health documents, conduct eligibility screenings, provide application assistance for Medicare-related benefit programs, and educate beneficiaries about other state and federal health insurance programs and benefits. Counselors listen carefully to the beneficiary's or caregiver's account of their individual situation and determines whether to:

Share information with, or provide an explanation to, the beneficiary or caregiver and provide follow up, as needed;

Assess and refer the beneficiary to another more applicable organization for assistance (such as 1-800-Medicare, the Department of Social Services, Social Security Administration, SMP, etc.);

Assess and refer the beneficiary or caregiver to the CHOICES Regional Coordinator or CHOICES staff for additional assistance, like help with non-Medicare related benefit programs and/or researching Medicare manuals.

When sending a beneficiary's case to CHOICES staff, the counselor may receive and confidentially transmit the beneficiary's documents to staff with the individual's confidentiality and data security procedures in mind. Open enrollment Counselors usually provide their services in person at Open Enrollment Counseling events located at community locations such as Area Agency on Aging offices, elderly housing sites, senior centers, libraries, etc.

### **Limitations**

Some issues may take longer to resolve than others or require additional sessions. Open Enrollment Counselors may not hold on to beneficiary's information. They must return all

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documents to each beneficiary or their authorized representative after each individual counseling session. In instances where beneficiaries need non-Medicare related assistance, counselors should refer the beneficiary to the CHOICES Regional Coordinator or CHOICES staff for further assistance.

## **Performance Measures & Standards**

This activity is measured by the number of counseling sessions reported into the SHIP National Performance Reporting Database and, if available, any client or volunteer feedback. In addition to reporting, Open Enrollment Counselors are required to participate in CHOICES trainings, take & pass CHOICES exams, and sign the CHOICES Memorandum of Understanding in order to maintain their CHOICES certification. The CHOICES Regional Coordinator begins contact with Open Enrollment Counselors a minimum of 30-45 days prior to the Medicare Open Enrollment Period and provides continual contact throughout this extremely busy season. This contact helps to determine the number of counseling sessions or open enrollment events the team member participates in which helps CHOICES fulfill its scope of work.

## **Qualifications**

- Good oral communication skills
- Active listening skills
- Ability and willingness to learn and share information related to Medicare and related programs
- Ability to explain Medicare coverage and program integrity rules and procedures in terms that beneficiaries can understand
- Ability to work independently
- Ability to work well with others from diverse backgrounds
- Ability to request assistance as needed, e.g. knowing when to refer complex issues and/or when the answer to a question is not known by the team member
- Computer literacy, including the ability to use the internet and online reporting programs
- Ability to travel to Open Enrollment events throughout the community

## **Time Commitment**

CHOICES volunteer schedules are flexible. The local CHOICES Regional Coordinator works with each Open Enrollment Counselor to determine the number of hours the volunteer works during the Medicare Open Enrollment Period, and to schedule assignments accordingly. Because of the training CHOICES counselors receive, they are asked to commit to a minimum of one 3 year term of service.

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**Location**

CHOICES Open Enrollment Counselors work at the offices of the local volunteer host organization (VHO) located in the AAA catchment area and at sites in the community where CHOICES open enrollment events take place.

**Supervision**

CHOICES volunteers who provide Medicare Open Enrollment counseling report to their local CHOICES Regional Coordinator.

**Benefits**

CHOICES Open Enrollment Counselors receive additional training on counseling skills, available local service providers and triage procedures. They also receive training on the basics of Medicare and related health insurance programs and benefits. All CHOICES team members have the satisfaction of participating in a national effort to educate Medicare beneficiaries, their caregivers, and the general public about CHOICES/SHIP, Medicare, and related health insurance programs. They are also invited to attend an annual volunteer appreciation event and receive recognition for their contributions to the program.

## **Outreach Volunteer**

### **Purpose**

Help accomplish the SHIP mission by transporting and disseminating CHOICES information to sites and events throughout the community, and/or presenting prepared copy or scripted activities through staffing of information kiosks or exhibits at outreach and enrollment events.

The SHIP mission is to empower, educate, and assist Medicare-eligible individuals, their families, and caregivers through objective outreach, counseling, and training to make informed health insurance decisions that optimize access to care and benefits.

### **Suggested Activities**

CHOICES outreach volunteers read or present CHOICES and Medicare related educational materials, or perform scripted activities, to inform and educate Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries, their caregivers, and others at meetings and other outreach events. Outreach volunteers also help to transport, deliver, distribute, and disseminate hard copy education and information materials to venues including but not limited to:

- Senior residential facilities, like senior apartment buildings and residential care facilities
- Senior centers and community centers
- Health care providers, including hospitals and clinics
- Agencies that serve Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries and their caregivers
- Health fair and senior fair booths or kiosks
- Libraries

Outreach volunteers may also identify other locations that will accept and display CHOICES education and information materials.

### **Limitations**

CHOICES volunteers whose role is to provide outreach provide general information about the CHOICES program, Medicare, and related programs. They do not engage beneficiaries in individual discussions about personal information or situations. Instead, they defer requests for individual counseling to CHOICES team members who provide one-on-one counseling.

### **Performance Measures & Standards**

This activity will be measured by the number of exhibits the volunteer staffs, the number of people who visit the exhibit, the number of CHOICES education and information materials (e.g.,

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brochures and fact sheets) taken by those attending the event or at location where materials have been distributed. Volunteers report outreach activities into the SHIP National Performance Reporting database. In addition to reporting, all volunteers are required to participate in CHOICES trainings, take & pass CHOICES exams, and sign the CHOICES Memorandum of Understanding in order to maintain their CHOICES certification. The CHOICES Regional Coordinator has frequent contact with the volunteer to determine which exhibits, outreach events, and locations the volunteer can distribute materials to help CHOICES fulfill its scope of work.

## **Qualifications**

- Good oral communication skills
- Ability to transport and carry education and information materials to designated locations
- Ability and willingness to distribute scripted information related to CHOICES/SHIP, Medicare, and other related health insurance programs
- Computer literacy, including ability to use the Internet and online reporting programs

## **Time Commitment**

CHOICES volunteer schedules are flexible. The local CHOICES Regional Coordinator works with each volunteer to determine the number of hours the volunteer works each month, and to schedule assignments accordingly. Because of the training CHOICES volunteers receive, they are asked to make a minimum commitment of one 3 year term of service.

## **Location**

Volunteers who provide outreach by distributing information and staffing exhibits work in their vehicles and at sites throughout the local AAA catchment area.

## **Supervision**

Volunteers who provide outreach assistance report to their local CHOICES Regional Coordinator.

## **Benefits**

CHOICES volunteers receive training on the basics of Medicare and related health insurance programs. They have the satisfaction of participating in a national effort to educate and empower Medicare beneficiaries, their families and caregivers, and the general public about CHOICES/SHIP, Medicare, and related health insurance programs and benefits. They are also

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invited to attend an annual volunteer appreciation event and receive recognition for their contributions to the program.

## **Presenter**

### **Purpose**

Help accomplish the SHIP mission by providing substantive presentations to groups in the community.

The SHIP mission is to empower, educate, and assist Medicare-eligible individuals, their families, and caregivers through objective outreach, counseling, and training to make informed health insurance decisions that optimize access to care and benefits.

### **Suggested Activities**

CHOICES presenters make 15 to 30 minute presentations, using CHOICES-approved PowerPoints and materials, to audiences that consist of Medicare beneficiaries, their caregivers, and/or other members of the public who want to gain awareness of the CHOICES program and the national effort to educate Medicare-eligible beneficiaries. Group presentations include an opportunity for Q & A with the audience about covered topics and information. These presentations may take place at:

- Senior centers and community centers
- Health fairs and senior fairs
- Medicare education events
- Meetings of civic or faith-based organizations
- Meetings of health care providers
- Meetings of local law enforcement officials
- Libraries
- Universities and colleges
- Other identified locations where in-depth presentations may be appropriate

### **Limitations**

CHOICES volunteers who make presentations are limited to providing general information about the CHOICES/SHIP program, Medicare and related topics. They do not engage beneficiaries in individual discussions about personal information or situations other than to answer basic questions. They defer requests for individual counseling to CHOICES team members who provide one-on-one counseling services.

### **Performance Measures & Standards**

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This activity is measured by presentations delivered, attendance numbers and an evaluation of the presenter's effectiveness in conveying information about CHOICES topics and program goals. Team members report group presentations into the SHIP National Performance Reporting database. In addition to reporting, all team members are required to participate in CHOICES trainings, take & pass CHOICES exams, and sign the CHOICES Memorandum of Understanding in order to maintain their CHOICES certification. The CHOICES Regional Coordinator has frequent contact with the team member to determine the number of presentations or outreach events the volunteer staffs to help CHOICES fulfill its scope of work.

### Qualifications

- Good oral communication and public speaking skills
- Ability and willingness to learn and share information related to CHOICES, Medicare, and other related health insurance programs
- Ability to work well with others from diverse backgrounds
- Ability to operate audiovisual equipment (e.g., Power Point program, laptop, and projector)
- Ability to travel to presentation sites throughout the community
- Computer literacy, including ability to use the Internet and online reporting programs

### Time Commitment

CHOICES volunteer schedules are flexible and based on the number of available scheduled presentations. The local CHOICES Regional Coordinator works with each volunteer to determine the number of hours the volunteer works each month, and to schedule assignments accordingly. Because of the training CHOICES presenters receive, they are asked to commit to a minimum of one 3 year term of service.

### Location

Volunteers who make group presentations work at host organizations throughout the AAA catchment area.

### Supervision

CHOICES volunteers who provide group presentations report to their local CHOICES Regional Coordinator.

### Benefits

Volunteers who make group presentations receive additional training on presentation skills. All

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CHOICES volunteers receive training on CHOICES, the basics of Medicare, and related health insurance programs and benefits. They have the satisfaction of participating in a national effort to educate and empower Medicare beneficiaries, their families and caregivers, and the general public about CHOICES/SHIP, Medicare, and related health insurance programs. They are also invited to attend an annual volunteer appreciation event and receive recognition for their contributions to the program.

## Incident Report, Complaints, Grievances, & Appeals

### Incident Report Procedures

#### Overview

This document's purpose is to provide CHOICES Regional Coordinators, volunteers, and partner volunteer host organizations with guidance on how to report and respond to incidents such as injuries, accidents, harassment, and serious judgment errors or other behavior missteps. This document focuses on volunteers and their responsibility to report incidents in which they are involved or otherwise witness.

#### Reporting

Volunteers are to report all injuries and accidents in which the volunteers are involved or witness, such as injuries to participants at events or counseling sessions.

Volunteers should notify their CHOICES Regional Coordinator by telephone as quickly as possible when response to the incident involves agencies such as the police, emergency response units, paramedics, or fire department.

Volunteers should complete an **Incident Reporting Form** to record relevant information for incidents that meet any of the following criteria:

The response to the incident involves agencies such as the police, emergency response units, paramedics, or fire department.

The volunteer or program participant receives medical care, or is advised by a staff person affiliated with the CHOICES program to seek medical care.

The incident involves, or is likely to involve, an insurance claim.

The incident involves an allegation or strong suspicion of physical, sexual, or financial abuse.

The incident involves the loss or theft of beneficiary or agency property.

The incident involves harassment, a serious error in judgment, or a misstep, including offensive or inappropriate remarks and behavior.

The incident involves the violation of a state or federal law.

The Incident Reporting Form collects information on time and location of the incident, a description of the incident and the parties involved, and the extent of the volunteer's involvement in the incident.

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Volunteers should submit the completed ***Incident Reporting Form*** to their CHOICES Regional Coordinator and primary contact at their Volunteer Host Organization (VHO), if applicable, as soon as possible.

### Staff Response

The CHOICES Regional Coordinator coordinates staff response to the incident, based upon what immediate steps were or were not already taken at the scene of the incident. Take one or more of the following **immediate** actions as needed:

- Call 911 in response to medical emergencies
- Contact police in response to automobile accidents and criminal activity
- Notify relevant authorities (e.g., police, public health, elder abuse, etc.)
- Photograph or otherwise document the incident site
- Notify staff at the volunteer worksite

Take one or more of these **follow-up** steps as soon as possible, depending upon the type of incident:

- Contact affected parties or witnesses
- Notify primary contact (if volunteers is placed at a VHO)
- Notify senior management at the AAA
- Notify the CHOICES Statewide Coordinator and/or SDA staff
- Notify an insurance carrier
- Take other steps as needed to resolve the incident

## **CHOICES Incident Report Form**

### **Overview**

Use this form to report any incident involving a CHOICES volunteer, including:

- Injury to the volunteer, client, or program participant
- Accidents, including motor vehicle accidents
- Property damage, including damage to equipment
- Lost possessions, files, or equipment
- Abuse of a beneficiary or other individual
- Harassment and offensive remarks
- Error in judgment

### **General Information**

Agency/Organization name: \_\_\_\_\_

CHOICES Regional Coordinator/VHO Primary Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Information about the Affected Person or Organization**

Check one:

- Volunteer    Beneficiary/Client    Program participant    Paid staff    Other

Affected party's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Information about the Volunteer (if not the affected party)**

Volunteer's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Information about the Incident**

Check all that apply:

- Injury                       Accident                       Property damage                       Lost possession
- Abuse                       Offensive remark                       Harassment                       Error
- Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

Date of the incident: \_\_\_\_\_ Time of the incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of the incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe what happened, how it happened, factors leading up to the incident, what was said or observed (attach separate sheet, if necessary):

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Witness name: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness name: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of physician consulted (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

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Name of hospital or clinic (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Was incident reported to the police?       Yes    No

Police contact (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

**Incident Reporter Information**

Reporter's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Reporter's title (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **CHOICES Complaint Instructions: Complaint by a CHOICES Volunteer**

### **Guiding principles**

Volunteers have the right to be accompanied to meetings or to be represented by their nominee at all meetings during this resolution process.

Complaints by volunteers shall be kept confidential other than to those directly involved in the complaint resolution procedure.

If at any time during the process or investigation, the CHOICES program concludes that a volunteer has filed a claim in bad faith, has refused to cooperate in an investigation of the complaint, or has provided false information regarding the complaint, disciplinary action up to and including termination of the volunteer may be taken.

### **Steps to take if you wish to file a complaint or grievance**

#### **Stage One**

If you, as a CHOICES volunteer, have a complaint or grievance, we wish to respond promptly and thoroughly. Please start by discussing your complaint or grievance with your CHOICES Regional Coordinator, explaining your view of what has happened and what you feel needs to be done to resolve the situation.

If your complaint is against your CHOICES Regional Coordinator, you can instead start by discussing the issue with the CHOICES Regional Coordinator's immediate supervisor, and/or the CHOICES Statewide Coordinator.

Fill out the Complaint Form at the end of this document, which includes the following information:

- Your name and person against whom the complaint is filed;
- The date of the incident precipitating the complaint;
- A concise description of the complaint and any precipitating incidences;
- The identity of anyone with relevant information or an explanation of where additional information can be found;
- Any documentation relevant to the complaint and where it can be found;
- Other information that supports the complaint;
- A description of any previous action taken to resolve the complaint, and
- A listing of all desired outcomes and reasons why such outcomes are appropriate.

The CHOICES Regional Coordinator will, if necessary, gather more information, determine if the complaint warrants further action and, as appropriate, act to resolve the complaint. This

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determination will be made within 7 business days, and then will be provided to you with an explanation and notification.

### **Stage Two**

If you feel that the issue has not been resolved satisfactorily, notify the CHOICES Regional Coordinator that you are not accepting the informal judgment.

The matter will then be referred to the CHOICES Regional Coordinator's immediate supervisor to resolve the complaint (reconsideration).

The complaint and grievance will be reviewed and a determination will be made within 14 business days of the receipt of your decision to not accept the informal judgment.

Notice of the formal reconsideration decision will be sent to all affected parties, along with a description of what next steps might occur based on the decision. Possible next steps might include, depending upon the nature of the complaint:

- Re-assignment to another location or role
- Disciplinary action against a volunteer or staff member
- Changes in the support provided the volunteer
- Additional training for a volunteer or staff member
- Adjustment in program procedures

### **Stage Three**

If you wish to appeal the formal reconsideration decision, then an appeal in writing can be submitted within 5 business days to the CHOICES Statewide Coordinator, who will review the appeal and issue a determination within 14 business days. An appeal may also be submitted by any other affected party.

Submit written appeals to:

CHOICES Statewide Coordinator

CT State Unit on Aging

55 Farmington Ave, 12<sup>th</sup> Floor

Hartford, CT 06105

This determination by the CHOICES Statewide Coordinator will constitute final disposition of the complaint or grievance.



**CHOICES Complaint Form:**

**Complaint by a CHOICES Volunteer**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Volunteer Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Complaint is against (name and relationship – e.g. client, staff person, another volunteer, etc.):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) of incident: \_\_\_\_\_

What is the nature of your complaint? Please describe the incident/s that occurred that led up to your complaint or grievance:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Is anyone else involved in your complaint or grievance, such as witnesses, and if so, who are they?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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Is there any documentation relevant to your complaint? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, where can it be found?

\_\_\_\_\_

Please add any other information that supports your complaint, if any:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What action (if any) have you taken already to resolve your complaint?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What would you like the outcomes of your complaint to be, and why do you see those outcomes as appropriate?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



**CHOICES Reconsideration/Appeal Form**

Use this form if you have received a formal written corrective action decision regarding your ability to continue providing CHOICES volunteer services. You may complete this form to request reconsideration of that decision. If you have received a formal reconsideration decision, you may also use this form to request an appeal. Attach copies of formal written decision(s).

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Volunteer: \_\_\_\_\_

Volunteer Role: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of CHOICES Regional Coordinator: \_\_\_\_\_

Volunteer Placement Location: \_\_\_\_\_

I do not agree with the outcome of the corrective action decision [**date of decision**] and/or the reconsideration decision [**date of decision or N/A**]. I am requesting reconsideration/appeal because:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Mail or fax your **reconsideration request** to the Area Agency on Aging where your CHOICES Regional Coordinator is located.

Submit your **appeal request** to:

CHOICES Statewide Coordinator

CT State Unit on Aging

55 Farmington Ave, 12<sup>th</sup> Floor

Hartford, CT 06105

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[Internal Use Only]

**Outcome of Reconsideration Request/Appeal:**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name and title of person documenting outcome:

\_\_\_\_\_

Describe outcome below (or attach a typed summary), including an explanation of how the outcome was communicated to all affected parties, attaching copies of any written communications of the outcome to affected parties:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

CHOICES Program Feedback

CHOICES Annual Survey

As part of our continued effort to improve involvement of volunteers in the CHOICES program, we would like your responses to the following questions. In some questions we ask for your opinion about your own situation and in some questions we ask you to assess how other volunteers might feel. All responses will be kept completely confidential. Do not sign the survey unless you wish to.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Approximately how long have you been involved with the CHOICES program? \_\_\_\_\_

CHOICES Regional Coordinator’s Area Agency on Aging location:  
\_\_\_\_\_

What is your volunteer role(s)? \_\_\_\_\_

To what extent do you think that volunteers are well-received by CHOICES paid staff?

- Well-received                      Generally well-received, but some exceptions
- Not well-received                Generally not well-received, but some exceptions

To what extent do you think volunteers are involved in decisions that will affect their volunteer work?

- Well involved                      Sometimes involved                      Not well involved

To what extent do you think volunteers are accepted and welcomed by clients?

- Well accepted                      Mixed reception                      Not well accepted

To what extent do you feel comfortable with the assignment(s) given to you or the volunteer at your site?

- Comfortable                      Somewhat comfortable                      Not comfortable

Do you feel that the CHOICES program provides sufficient orientation about the program

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Can you suggest any ways that we might use to recruit new volunteers?

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What's the best experience you've had while volunteering for us?

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What's the worst experience you've had while volunteering for us?

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If you could make three changes to improve our volunteer program, what would they be?

1. 

---

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2. 

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---
3. 

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Overall, how would you rate our volunteer program? (Please circle. 1 = Terrible; 10 = Great)

|          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |       |  |
|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|-------|--|
| Terrible |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    | Great |  |
| 1        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |       |  |

Use the space on the back of this page to make further comments about our CHOICES

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programs, its engagement of volunteers, or to provide any other additional remarks.

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