

Medicare Part D saves money, survey says

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The Medicare Part D prescription-drug plan helps beneficiaries save money but needs to be simplified, a healthcare industry survey finds.

The survey of healthcare opinion leaders by the private Commonwealth Fund finds greatest support for the prescription-drug benefit among the insurance and healthcare sector, at 95 percent. It finds lesser support, at 56 percent to 67 percent, among academic and research institutions and among those involved with healthcare delivery.

John Rother, group executive officer of Policy and Strategy for AARP, says Part D has fallen short in providing generous coverage to people with limited incomes. He recommends changes, such as eliminating the asset test and simplifying the application process for the low-income subsidy.

Three-fourths of the survey respondents also said benefits should become more standardized to reduce variations among plans.

The Commonwealth Fund hired Harris Interactive to conduct the survey by e-mail June 1-19. Of the 1,246 people surveyed, 180 responded. Because of the nature of the survey, which was not based on a probability sample, no sampling error could be calculated, the fund said in its release.

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