

# MAKING A DIFFERENCE



## Grand Challenges

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## Grand Challenge: Health

**Title:** Alternative Counseling Options Offered During Medicare Part D Open Enrollment

### Why is this issue important?

Many residents rely on the Shawnee County Extension Office to offer counseling services during Medicare Part D Open Enrollment, held every year October 15–December 7. Even with the uncertainty of COVID, Medicare beneficiaries still needed to compare drug plans during that time frame in 2020. Due to older age and a higher likelihood of having serious medical conditions than younger adults, most Medicare beneficiaries are at a greater risk of becoming seriously ill if they are infected with COVID-19.

### How did Extension address this issue?



In keeping the health and safety of Medicare clients and office staff in mind, Susan Fangman, Family & Consumer Sciences Agent and certified Senior Health Insurance Counselor for Kansas, was able to provide all 200 plus counseling sessions by Zoom or phone, providing the assistance needed while keeping clients safe at home. Sessions were followed up with emails or mailings with information discussed during the session. Susan was also able to provide clients how-to videos with step-by-step instructions on how to use the Medicare.gov Plan Finder to enroll in a plan.

### What was the impact?

During the 2021 Medicare Part D Open Enrollment period:

- 204 Medicare beneficiaries received one-on-one counseling sessions with Susan via Zoom or phone.
- \$77,806 in expected savings to clients who changed plans
- *"Thanks for all the great information and patience you showed us during our phone Part D conversation. The new plan we enrolled in will save us a great deal of money. We really appreciate the videos and plans you emailed. I would highly recommend you to friends."* Steve & Joyce– new clients