

Arizona SHIP Training and Certification Program

Initial Training

New SHIP Counselors attend a 30 hour initial training to learn about Medicare and related topics. Following the training, some SHIP Coordinators have their new volunteers complete a questionnaire to gauge how much they've learned.

Update Training

SHIP Counselors complete 10 hours of in-service training per year. Counselors can choose what type of in-service training they would like to attend. Options include attending presentations or events sponsored by the CMS Regional Office, Medicaid, Social Security, the Arizona Department of Insurance, or other organizations that serve Medicare beneficiaries.

Additionally, Counselors re-take the initial training every two years to brush up on their Medicare knowledge and make sure they haven't forgotten anything. Regular updates are also sent to Counselors through email and snail mail.

Mentoring

New SHIP Counselors are mentored by experienced volunteers or staff members before they begin counseling on their own. New Counselors shadow their mentors for at least 16 hours and learn firsthand how to assist beneficiaries with Medicare issues. Counselors begin helping clients once they feel ready and their mentors assist them until they feel fairly confident counseling on their own.

Mentoring has been part of the Arizona SHIP training program for more than eight years. Counselors really like the mentoring process, and report that it gives them more confidence to counsel on their own.

Exercises

The Arizona SHIP also uses exercises and games to help Counselors learn more about Medicare, including an SMP fraud game and a bingo game.

Advice from the AZ SHIP

It's a great idea to match a new volunteer with a seasoned counselor. I would recommend doing so after any type of Medicare training. It really helps new volunteers learn and become more confident in their abilities. You can also do this with new volunteers who want to deliver community presentations instead of counseling. Encourage them to watch and assist someone who has experience conducting outreach. In both cases, a veteran volunteer or staff member is there to provide moral support and technical assistance. Our experience has shown that this mentoring process is tremendously helpful to new volunteers.