

Initial Training

Arizona SHIP

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.

Connecticut CHOICES

The Connecticut SHIP, the Connecticut Health insurance assistance, Outreach, Information and referral, Counseling, Eligibility, and Screening (CHOICES) program, provides its volunteers with a 5-day, 27-hour initial training about Medicare and related topics.

Indiana SHIP

The Indiana SHIP provides its new volunteers with a 5-day, 30-hour initial training. The training is usually scheduled for one or two days per week. Volunteers receive their first SHIP manual prior to the training, along with a welcome letter and training agenda. The Indiana SHIP has found that new volunteers really appreciate having the SHIP manual in advance. It allows them to become a little familiar with the material and relieves a lot of their nervousness. Volunteers also really like the way the manual is written. The Indiana SHIP created its manual so that volunteers can read from it like a script, if they ever need to. The manual covers Medicare, Supplemental Insurance, Long Term Care Financing, Prescription Coverage, Low-income Assistance and many other topics.

Iowa SHIIP

The Iowa Senior Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP) offers a 6-day, 36-hour initial training for its new volunteers. The training teaches volunteers about all Medicare benefits and related topics, including Medicare supplement insurance, employer provided retiree health plans, Medicaid, Long Term Care Insurance, and other health insurance options. As part of the training, volunteers spend one full day in a computer lab, where they learn how to use the Medicare website, complete online reporting, and more.

Maine SHIP

New SHIP volunteers and staff attend a 3 day, 13-hour initial training to learn about Medicare and related topics. Additional training is available, depending upon the interests and training requirements for volunteers and staff. Volunteers and staff can also learn more about Medicare and SHIP by visiting Maine's interactive online training website. Maine's online certification materials include modules on all aspects of Medicare as well as other state-specific modules such as Error, Fraud and Abuse; Skills and Responsibilities; MaineCare; and Long-Term Care Insurance.

Massachusetts SHINE

The Massachusetts SHIP, the Serving Health Information Needs of Elders (SHINE) program, provides its new volunteers with a 12-day, 48-hour initial training. Volunteers complete the course by attending 1 - 2 days of training per week for approximately 6 - 12 weeks. New SHINE volunteers learn about Medicare Parts A, B, and D, Medicare Advantage, Medigap, Medicaid, Long Term Care, the Massachusetts SPAP, and other insurance options.

Before attending the initial training, volunteers receive a welcome letter and the first two chapters of their SHINE training manual. They are asked to read these chapters before the first day of class, so they are prepared to discuss the material and ask questions. Volunteers receive the rest of their training manuals on the first day of training. They are assigned additional chapters to read prior to each class. Then, during each day of SHINE training, volunteers spend the morning reviewing important concepts and the afternoon applying those concepts using case studies.

Nebraska SHIIP

The Nebraska Senior Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP) provides its volunteers with a 2-day, 16-hour initial training course about Medicare-related topics. The training also includes a hands-on computer session that teaches volunteers to use important Internet resources, such as the Medicare website.

Oregon SHIBA

Oregon's SHIP, the Senior Health Insurance Benefits Assistance (SHIBA) program, uses three steps to train its new volunteers. First, volunteers learn about Medicare through eight online training modules. They self-study at their own pace and complete [eight online quizzes](#) to demonstrate what they've learned. When it is available in their area, new volunteers attend a 2-day, 12-hour training to learn even more about Medicare. SHIBA has found that these two initial training methods complement one another very effectively.

Washington SHIBA Helpline

The Washington state SHIP, the Statewide Health Insurance Benefits Advisors (SHIBA) Helpline, has transformed its volunteer training program over the past three years. SHIBA has moved from knowledge-focused training to a model that trains volunteers based on tasks they will perform in their SHIBA roles. The new training is based on adult learning theory and task analyses that identify competencies volunteers need to have when they finish training. For more information about SHIBA's task-based training, click [here](#).

The length of initial volunteer training varies based on the role volunteers choose. Roles may include administration, outreach, data entry, public speaking, counseling, and other roles the local SHIBA groups need. Because SHIBA serves clients of all ages, including folks under age 65 who are not on Medicare, volunteers interested in the most complex roles (such as counseling) may spend as many as 32 hours in class, as well as additional time studying and doing other activities outside of class that further their learning.

Due to the amount of information covered in training classes, SHIBA encourages volunteers to use their resources. Remembering everything is not always possible – but it is always okay for volunteers to look up information. SHIBA maintains all participant training materials online on its Web site, and provides volunteers with tools and suggestions on ways to organize their own reference material.