

## **Nebraska SHIIP Training and Certification Program**

### **Initial Training**

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.

### **Update Training**

Each year, SHIIP volunteers attend 2 days of update training – one day in the spring and one day in the fall. Volunteers need to attend these trainings and complete an annual re-certification “test” to maintain their SHIIP certification.

### **Competency “Testing”**

In 2007, the Nebraska SHIIP began having volunteers take a “re-certification” at its annual spring update training. The re-certification is a 30 item, multiple-choice questionnaire about a section of the SHIIP training manual. Volunteers have approximately thirty minutes to complete the re-certification and can use their manuals to find the correct answers. Then, everyone discusses the questions and correct answers. The re-certifications are collected and “graded” at the state SHIIP office. If there are any areas that volunteers need to brush up on, they receive additional training to bring them up to speed.

The Nebraska SHIIP has found it’s very useful to create questions directly from the training manual and then allow volunteers to use their manuals to find the answers. This encourages volunteers to re-visit and become more familiar with their manuals. They get more comfortable with where to find information and also get a refresher on the Medicare-related information.

### **Exercises**

The Nebraska SHIIP regularly incorporates interactive games and activities into its trainings. SHIIP Trainers have developed 7 – 8 different case scenarios to help volunteers think about and apply the concepts they’ve learned in training. Volunteers consider the scenarios and then come together to discuss them as a group. Additionally, SHIIP has created Medicare-related games based upon popular TV shows, such as “Are You Smarter than a Fifth Grader,” “Who Wants to be a Millionaire,” and “Jeopardy.” Feedback from volunteers has been extremely positive. They love the interactive learning opportunities.

### **Advice from the Nebraska SHIIP**

There are a couple of things you may want to keep in mind if you're thinking about using a competency "test" or re-certification. Don't make it seem like a chore or a big bad test. It's important to stress from the beginning that it's a way for volunteers to become better counselors and for trainers to become better teachers. Framing the "test" in this way will make the process easier for you and your volunteers.