

OHIO'S BEST RX

Ohio's "Best Rx" is a prescription drug discount card program designed to lower the cost of prescriptions for Ohio residents over age 60 or with incomes less than 250% of the federal poverty level who have no other prescription drug insurance coverage. With the cost of prescription drugs continuing to rise, and the numbers without insurance coverage growing, the goal of Best Rx is to improve access to needed medications at a substantial discount and through a wide network of participating pharmacies.

The program is the result of legislation passed by the Ohio General Assembly and signed by the Governor in December 2003. With a framework initially conceived by a coalition of groups representing drug manufacturers (the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America), the AFL-CIO, the American Association of Retired Persons, and others, Best Rx is designed to pass on to program participants most of the savings associated with negotiated drug prices and manufacturer rebates. Rather than paying a participating pharmacy's usual charge to an individual with no drug insurance coverage, a Best Rx participant will pay the "Best Rx price." This price will be at the average of what the state employee and state retiree health plans would pay for that prescription, minus any rebate offered to the program by the manufacturer of the drug. There will be small additional fees to cover the pharmacist's professional services and the administration of the program. The Best Rx card will be available at no charge to participants, who will also have a mail order delivery option.

The Best Rx program has three key objectives:

- To maximize individual, pharmacy, and manufacturer participation;
- To achieve savings for program participants; and
- To provide services with efficiency and accountability.

Program activities to meet those objectives will include: coordinated and extensive outreach to eligible individuals; a streamlined application process requiring little documentation; prompt determination of eligibility and issuance of the "Best Rx" card; participant services to assure ready access to a participating pharmacy; administrative simplicity and efficient claims processing to recruit and retain pharmacies in the Best Rx network; offering the lowest possible Best Rx price through accurate calculations, frequent updates, and manufacturer agreements to provide voluntary rebates; and focused program reporting and evaluation. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, which is responsible for program administration, intends to contract for many of these services with an organization experienced in pharmaceutical management in order to operate most efficiently.

The Best Rx program is expected to begin enrollment in Fall, 2004.