



# ask SHIP

**Q: I recently attended an event where SHIP counselors were answering people's questions about Medicare. I would love to do something like this. How can I become a SHIP volunteer?**

**A.** SHIP counselors are the key to our organization's success.

SHIP (State Health Insurance Assistance Program) offers a variety of volunteer opportunities throughout the state of Indiana. SHIP's well-trained volunteers provide one-on-one assistance, counseling by telephone, and public information through community events.

SHIP currently has 290 counselors throughout Indiana! We offer 60 sites throughout the state for assistance. There is probably a site near you!

You do not need to know a lot about Medicare to volunteer as a SHIP counselor because SHIP provides all of the tools and training you will need to get started.

SHIP is a free, unbiased counseling program provided by the Indiana State Department of Insurance.

SHIP volunteers are called to answer questions regarding Original Medicare, Medicare Advantage, Medicare Supplements, Medicaid, employer benefit plans, long term care, paying for prescriptions and more.

SHIP Counselors are the Medicare experts for their local community. They do not sell any kind of insurance products and must be impartial.

In addition to answering questions related to Medicare, SHIP counselors might also:

- Make client contacts through face-to-face appointments, local telephone calls, 800 telephone calls,
- Attend presentations, and other local activities.
- Assist with applications for financial assistance programs.
- Compare insurance plans side-by-side.
- Refer to other agencies as needed.

To become a SHIP counselor, you also must:

- Complete a 30-hour basic training which includes using a computer
- Complete hands-on volunteer shadowing
- Want to help people with Medicare questions in your community
- Attend regular local inservice training sessions (usually two half-day sessions per year)
- NOT be affiliated with (i.e., employed by, or in a position to sell) any insurance product, agency, company or service
- Make a minimum one-year commitment to SHIP
- Be willing to assure complete confidentiality to every client
- Complete required paperwork documenting each contact

If you are interested in becoming a SHIP counselor, need more information about SHIP, or have questions regarding anything related to Medicare, contact SHIP. Call 1-800-452-4800, 866-846-0139 TDD, or visit [www.medicare.in.gov](http://www.medicare.in.gov). You can also find us on Facebook and Twitter.