



# Brain Injury Association of Texas

## Enewsletter

### Recent News & Events

Greetings!  
The Brain Injury Association of Texas is pleased to be sending out our first e-newsletter.

There have been many changes within the association in recent months, most notably a new Board has been in place since last fall. The first order of business was to develop a strategic plan that created better sustainability for the Association.

The BIATX offices were moved to 316 W. 12<sup>th</sup> St. in Austin. We share office space and thus also share some fixed expenses with The Coalition of Texans with Disabilities, good partners of ours on legislative matters. We are also located one block from the Capitol.

The BIATX also launched a new web site earlier this year. The Phase I of the upgraded site includes resources for families, tbi statistics and a special section to receive on-line donations and memberships. Phase II set to launch later this year will include tutorials for families navigating state agencies for benefits, provider directories and Survivor Success Stories. There are many events set for this year across the state, for more information about the Walk for Thought, our regional seminars or public policy initiative, visit the web site often. Thank you for your support!

[www.biatx.org](http://www.biatx.org)

### Brain Injury Association 2005 Conference Wrap-up

April 3, 2006

On August 19-21, 2005, the Texas brain injury community came together in San Antonio for the 23rd Annual Brain Injury Association of Texas State Conference. Over 150 survivors, family members, rehabilitation professionals, and representatives of state agencies attended the event, which was held at the Holiday Inn Select Airport Hotel in San Antonio. The conference has traditionally provided a great opportunity for those within the brain injury community to network, to share information about clinical and research advances, to increase awareness about public policy issues, and to provide information about state and community services. This year was no exception and offered a variety of interesting presentations, as well as opportunities to visit with the various service providers that were sponsors or exhibitors for the meeting.

“Threshold for Change” was the theme of the 2005 conference, reflecting the great steps that have been made to rebuild the Brain Injury Association of Texas. The Association is poised for tremendous growth within the coming

years, and the annual Conference was a prime opportunity to celebrate the accomplishments of the organization. The 2005 conference committee was especially pleased to offer a number of featured speakers and special events, including the following:

**Holly Kostrzewski**, Injury Prevention Program Coordinator, Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa  
“Succeeding in College and in Life with Traumatic Brain Injury: My Story ‘With Both Hands’”

**Warren Lux, M.D.**, Deputy Director – Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center, Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Washington, D.C.  
“Traumatic Brain Injury and Warfare in the 21st Century”

Screening of documentary film “**The Loss of Nameless Things**” about the life of Oakley Hall III

**Mary Morgan**, author of “Like a Bolt”, a story of recovery after stroke  
“The Power Within”

Special Ethics Panel Presentation: **Cindy Ivanhoe, M.D.**, Director, Brain Injury and Stroke Program, The Institute for

Rehabilitation and Research; **David Zientek, M.D.**, Interventional Cardiologist and Affiliated Scholar with the Center for Clinical Bioethics at Georgetown University  
**Steven Waldman, J.D.**, “What is Enough and When is Enough, Enough? The Schiavo case.”

These presentations were inspiring, thought-provoking, and well-received by the audience in attendance. BIATX is grateful to these presenters for their participation in making the 23rd Annual Conference such a great success. In addition, we thank all of the speakers who contributed to a strong overall program that addressed so many topics of importance to attendees.

We would also like to acknowledge and express our sincere appreciation for our Gold Sponsors, **Mary Lee Foundation** and **Brown-Karhan Healthcare**, and our Silver Sponsors, **ResCare Premier** and **Touchstone Neurorecovery Center**, whose generous contributions made this year’s conference possible. We also wish to thank all of the exhibitors at this year’s meeting, whose support was instrumental in putting on this annual meeting. The Brain Injury

Association of Texas  
would also like to express  
our appreciation to all  
those who attended this  
year's conference.  
Bringing together  
individuals from  
throughout the state is what

makes the conference such  
a valuable event for the  
brain injury community. In  
particular, we would like to  
acknowledge the support of  
the Department of  
Assistive and  
Rehabilitative Services

(DARS), whose leadership  
continues to support the  
attendance of rehabilitation  
counselors at the annual  
BIATX conference.

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## TIERS Offers New Application Options for State Services

By Jonas Schwartz

The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) want to inform Texans of new ways to apply for state services. The new system—Texas Integrated Eligibility Redesign System (TIERS)—will be used to apply for Medicaid, food stamps, the Children's Health Insurance Program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, and long-term care.

TIERS allow Texans to apply for services by phone, in person, over the Internet at [www.yourtexasbenefits.com](http://www.yourtexasbenefits.com), and by fax or mail. Field offices will be strategically located across the state for consumers who are required or choose to handle part of the application process in person. The new system also will upgrade technology and streamline processes to gain efficiencies and generate savings that could be better spent on direct client services.

If you have questions or receive questions from consumers who want to apply for these state services and reside in areas where the new options are available should advise consumers to phone 2-1-1 for information. HHSC also has developed online resources, including a "Frequently Asked Questions" document, that provide more details.

TIERS is currently available in Austin (Eberhart, Rutherford, and Airport Road) and San Marcos and will be rolled out across the state in 2006. The roll out has been placed on hold for thirty days so that some technical issues with the system can be addressed. Operations will not stop at the current pilot site in Austin. The following schedule is proposed only:

- April San Antonio/Hill Country
- May East and West Rural Texas, (including Midland And Longview/Tyler)
- June Houston/Harris County
- July North Central and Southeast Central
- August Dallas/Fort Worth/Metroplex
- September El Paso/North Border and Panhandle
- October South Border/Rio Grande Valley

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## Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage Has Arrived

By Jonas Schwartz

The Health and Human Services Commission, the Department of State Health Services, and the Department of Aging and Disability want to alert Texans who receive both Medicare and Medicaid to understand how the new Medicare Rx prescription drug program will affect them. As part of this effort, a list of frequently asked questions about the program is being made available to provide basic information and direct consumers to resources for more information. The questions appear at the end of this article

The New Year is an important time for people with Medicare, especially those still considering enrolling in the new Medicare Rx prescription drug program. Beneficiaries can enroll in one of many Medicare Rx prescription drug plans being offered in Texas, and those who enroll before May 15 will have prescription drug coverage through Medicare Rx for 2006. Included in that group are roughly half a million Texans with Medicare who also receive prescription drug coverage from Medicaid.

All Texans who receive prescription drug assistance from Medicaid and benefits from Medicare are automatically eligible for "extra help," the low-income subsidy for Medicare Rx. Those who receive "extra help" pay no annual deductible and no monthly premiums if they enroll in one of the 16 basic-level prescription drug plans covered by the low-income subsidy. A

list of the plans, plus other information for dual eligible clients, is available at [www.texasmedicarerx.org](http://www.texasmedicarerx.org), a website designed especially for Medicare/Medicaid clients.

“Medicare Rx is made up of a number of different prescription drug plans offered by private health care providers,” said HHSC Senior Policy Analyst Trey Berndt. “Like the general Medicare population, our dual eligible clients have a choice. They can choose which of the 16 basic-level prescription drug plans provides the best coverage.”

Here are some questions to consider when shopping for a Medicare Rx drug plan for a beneficiary who is eligible for “extra help.”

1. Does the plan’s formulary cover all the medications the client needs?
2. Does the plan have in its network the pharmacy the client uses?
3. Is the plan one of 16 basic-level plans covered by “extra help,” the client’s low-income subsidy?

Also, remember that “dual eligible” clients can change their Medicare prescription drug plan at any time, which gives them more flexibility than other Medicare beneficiaries who can change prescription drug plans during the annual open enrollment period only.

For more information, visit [www.texasmedicarerx.org](http://www.texasmedicarerx.org) or call the Health Information Counseling and Advocacy Program, also known as Area Agency on Aging, at (800) 252-9240 to talk to a benefits counselor. Expect to leave a message, but a counselor will call you back in a few days.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### 2006 Changes to Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage

#### **1. Is my Medicaid drug coverage going to change?**

If you are eligible for Medicare, your Medicaid prescription drug coverage is changing starting January 1, 2006. Medicare will cover your prescription drugs while Medicaid will still pay for your other medical costs.

You do not need to apply for “extra help” if you are already on a Medicaid program.

You should have received a yellow notice informing you of which prescription drug plan (PDP) you were enrolled in. You may change your drug plan at any time. Your pharmacy can look up which plan you are enrolled in.

#### **2. I have Medicare and Medicaid but did not receive an enrollment letter. Can I get my prescriptions filled in January?**

If you are not enrolled in a PDP and need prescription drugs, take (1) your Medicare card and (2) your current Medicaid ID card to your pharmacy. A system is in place that will allow the pharmacist to process your drug coverage.

#### **3. How do I find out which plan I am enrolled in?**

- Find yellow letter from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services/Centers for Medicare and Medicaid; plan assignment is in the fourth paragraph of yellow letter or
- Find letter from assigned prescription drug plan or
- Ask pharmacy for help or
- Go to “how to look up a plan assignment,” (second topic) <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/medicarereform/states/transdualelig.asp>, or
- Call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227).

#### **4. How do I enroll in a drug plan?**

- Call plan directly at their listed 800 number or
- Ask pharmacy for help or
- Go to <http://www.medicare.gov/> or
- Contact your DADS caseworker or
- Call Health Information Counseling and Advocacy Program, also known as Area Agency on Aging, at (800) 252-9240 to talk to a benefits counselor. Expect to leave a message, but a counselor will call you back in a few days. Have this information ready for your call.

- Name
- Zip code
- Telephone number for return call
- Medicare card (small white card with red & blue stripe) for SS claim number and Medicare effective dates
- Medicaid card (if applicable)
- List of currently prescribed medications including dosage and supply (30 days, 60 days, 90 days, etc.)

**5. Will my drugs be covered?**

- Formularies vary by plan.
- Check your plan for coverage of your drugs.
- Talk to your doctor if a drug is not covered.

**6. How do I report fraud?**

If you think your personal information is being misused, call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227).

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## Visit The New BIATX Web Site

The new BIATX web site went live in early April. Click the links below for a quick overview of the new content.

- Directory of [free online publications](#)
- [Regional Seminar](#) Update
- [Support Groups](#) in your area
- [Walk for Thought](#) Fundraiser Update