



Passion, Purpose, and People:

One woman's mission to support the Medicare-eligible

Janette W. is a people person. So much so that she dedicates her “second” career to helping people—a job that’s like a calling. She works part-time as a resource specialist helping older adults and their caregivers access health care information at Camarillo Health Care District in Ventura County, a palm tree-laden region in the southernmost part of California’s Central Coast.

Janette spends her working hours sharing information about Medicare and other health care services available to older adults in her community while using her enrollment experience as motivation.

“I found Medicare enrollment confusing, and I’m lucky—I knew where to find the information I needed, but most people are not that fortunate,” said Janette. “Many of my family and friends have had issues. The process needs to be better explained, which is why I do what I do.”

When Janette enrolled in Medicare, she got help from the state’s [Health Insurance Counseling & Advocacy Program](#) (HICAP). HICAP is a free service for Medicare-eligible adults available through the [California Department of Aging](#) that provides confidential, one-on-one counseling and assistance. Now, Janette regularly helps people use HICAP to get the coverage they need and deserve.

“I feel like I’m making a real difference in people’s lives,” she said. “I provide reading materials and make our clients’ appointments with HICAP counselors when they’re ready to get started.”

“*My advice is, don’t wait. Enroll when you are eligible. It’s important to have the coverage you might need as you get older. You earned it.*”

To address issues Medicare-eligible Californians face every year, the Department of Health Care Services [Office of Medicare Innovation and Integration \(OMII\)](#) offers information about the Medicare program and population. As a first-of-its-kind state office focused on Medicare, OMII seeks to improve access to quality care by developing Medicare expertise in support of expanding innovative programs, policies, and partnerships for the state’s nearly [6.6 million](#) beneficiaries, a population that grew by 11.3% between 2016-2022 and makes up more than 10% of all Medicare beneficiaries nationwide.

While Janette helps the Medicare-eligible in her California community, OMII serves as an example for other state Medicaid agencies seeking to develop Medicare expertise to improve access to quality care for enrollees. Additionally, the [Medicare Academy](#), a new initiative co-funded by Arnold Ventures, The Commonwealth Fund, and [The SCAN Foundation](#), is piloting an education program for state Medicaid agencies to improve care for people eligible for both Medicaid and Medicare.

As improvements are made, Janette will continue her “people-first” work by helping older adults make informed decisions about their coverage options.

“My advice is, don’t wait. Enroll when you are eligible,” she said. “It’s important to have the coverage you might need as you get older. You earned it.”

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This profile was developed with support from The SCAN Foundation, a public charity devoted to transforming care for older adults in ways that preserve dignity and encourage independence. For more information about The SCAN Foundation’s work in improving Medicare resources and delivery in California, visit <https://www.thescanfoundation.org/initiatives/>.