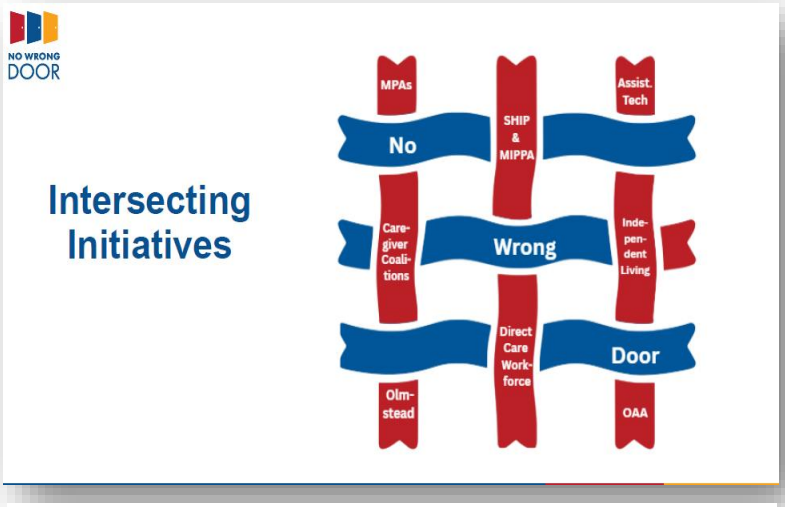
Strengthening Benefit Awareness Through No Wrong Door Outreach and Marketing

Each year, millions of older adults and people with disabilities miss opportunities to receive benefits that can reduce their health care costs, improve financial security, and increase access to long-term services and supports (LTSS). Although financial assistance programs such as Medicare Savings Programs (MSPs), the Low-Income Subsidy (LIS)/Extra Help prescription drug program, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) are available, many eligible individuals never enroll because they are unaware of these programs or do not know where to seek assistance. State No Wrong Door (NWD) Systems and trusted community partners help address this challenge by connecting people to information and assistance and person-centered counseling through coordinated outreach, marketing, and partnerships.

Overview of MIPPA and NWD Systems

Through the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act (MIPPA), federal funding is provided to states and tribes to support outreach and education of MSPs, LIS/Extra Help, and Medicare's preventive benefits for Medicare beneficiaries, especially those who are low-income and/or residents of rural areas. MIPPA-funded entities, that is, State Health Insurance Assistance Programs (SHIPs), Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), and Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs), help eligible Medicare beneficiaries learn about and obtain benefits that can reduce their Medicare costs by thousands of dollars each year. In addition, MIPPA funds the National Center for Benefits Outreach and Enrollment, including Benefit Enrollment Centers (BECs), which are ADRCs and other community-based organizations (CBOs) that provide direct local support to older adults and people with disabilities on eligibility and enrollment into a spectrum of benefit programs, including SNAP and the Low Income Heating and Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

Figure 1



Source: Administration for Community Living (ACL)

A NWD System is a network of state agencies and CBOs that assist older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers at all income levels in locating and navigating the services they need through coordinated points of entry. These entry points connect people to a range of services and benefits, including benefits that make Medicare more affordable for eligible individuals. A state's NWD System relies on a

diverse network of community partners that support people seeking LTSS, and MIPPA is an integral component of the broader NWD framework (see Figure 1). Through connections and partnerships, NWD Systems are strengthened to provide streamlined access to services and benefits. From an individual perspective, a state's NWD system and MIPPA resources together support access to benefits. For example, someone who needs LTSS to remain independent at home may receive person-centered counseling and navigation to secure the spectrum of services they need.

A coordinated NWD System consists of four key elements that are essential to streamline access to services: (1) State Governance and Administration, (2) Public Outreach and Coordination with Key Referral Sources, (3) Person-Centered Counseling, and (4) Streamlined Eligibility for Public Programs. The "Public Outreach and Coordination with Key Referral Sources" element is core to ensuring people know where to go for reliable, unbiased help accessing services and benefits. MIPPA-funded outreach is a component of the outreach and public awareness functions of a NWD System, as it closely aligns with the goals of increasing awareness, building trust through a person-centered approach, and connecting people to services and supports, including benefits.

Why Awareness Matters

A NWD System's core value is giving people a coordinated, trusted place to turn regardless of which specific benefit or service they ultimately need. Many people remain unaware of services, supports, or programs that could save them money, such as Medicare's financial assistance programs and no-cost preventive care. Without coordinated entry points, someone eligible for help may contact the wrong agency, give up after one dead end, or never learn the program exists. As a result, those who are eligible can miss out on essential services or benefits. By improving awareness through NWD Systems' trusted entry points, states help people connect to support earlier, before challenges become urgent, regardless of which door they first walk through.

Partnerships Expand Access

State NWD Systems can improve awareness of LTSS and benefits through state agencies and community organizations that are part of the system, including MIPPA and SHIP grantees, AAAs, ADRCs, Centers for Independent Living (CILs), Tribes, and BECs. These partners provide unbiased information and assistance, and each play a key role in enabling streamlined access to services and benefits. While the network may be known as a NWD System or an ADRC, some states brand their NWD System under a distinct, locally recognizable name rather than the term 'No Wrong Door' itself. For example, **Maryland** Access Point (MAP) and **Michigan's** MI Options Program both function as their state's NWD System. Because they are trusted local organizations, CBOs are well positioned to educate individuals about available programs, provide enrollment assistance, and connect people with

community supports. When community organizations, such as MIPPA grantees, SHIPs, and BECs, are integrated into an NWD System, they can reach more people and connect them to benefits more efficiently.

In **Wisconsin**, the MIPPA and SHIP programs are fully integrated into the state's ADRC, or NWD System. Strong partnerships with community organizations help expand the reach of MIPPA and SHIP services, such as the Wisconsin Board on Aging and Long-Term Care (BOALTC), the Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources (GWAAR), the Greater Lakes Inter-Tribal Council (GLITC), Covering Wisconsin Health Navigators, Walgreens, health care systems, and numerous local community organizations serving older adults and individuals with disabilities.

Through **Alabama**'s NWD System, One Door Alabama, benefits counselors across the state's 13 ADRCs provide comprehensive benefits eligibility and enrollment support for programs such as MSPs, LIS/Extra Help, and other services and programs. One Door Alabama is a partnership between the Alabama Medicaid Agency, Alabama Department of Senior Services, and Alabama Aging and Disability Resource Centers.

Strategies to Increase Awareness

NWD Systems make it easier for people to find help and access programs that can reduce their Medicare costs by enabling access to various services, programs, and benefits. States use several approaches to help people find assistance. Below are examples of best practices.

Figure 2



Source: https://mofamilytofamily.org/green-folder-resources/

Central access points, such as websites and toll-free numbers, allow a state's NWD System to serve as a single starting point for multiple programs. The website, Missouri *family* to *family*, a statewide resource center, features a compendium of integrated services and supports. The "Navigating Your Good Life Folder", sometimes referred to as the "Green Folder", includes a

section titled "No Wrong Door Key Resources" which lists resources that can help individuals and caregivers understand and access supports and services, including Medicare counseling through the Missouri SHIP. See Figure 2.

Wisconsin's website and YouTube channel feature a video titled "ADRC: Your Bridge to Support", describing the state's ADRCs/NWD System and available services and supports, including benefits and financial assistance. Additionally, **Michigan's** *MI Options Program*, the state's NWD System, facilitates calls from residents seeking information on LTSS and Medicare through a central toll-free number. The caller is then referred to agencies for Medicare and MIPPA counseling and/or to person-centered options counseling (PCOC) for LTSS. Individuals may obtain these services from staff certified to provide both SHIP/MIPPA and PCOC counseling.

Marketing. Strategies to raise awareness of how to access information about benefits and services are delivered through print, media, and digital tools, using plain language and often in multiple languages, to reach a broader audience. As an example, **Wisconsin's** Department of Health Services led a statewide ADRC marketing campaign to raise awareness of ADRCs among Tribal partners and local communities. See Figure 3.

Figure 3



Source: https://www.ta-community.com/t/m1ygycb/wisconsin-adrc-and-tribal-agency-partnerships

Figure 4



Source: https://dars.virginia.gov/about/divisions/no-wrong-door/

Additionally, identifiable branding, such as **Michigan's** *MI Options Program*, and recognizable logos, like **Virginia's** NWD logo, convey the purpose of a state's NWD initiative in an easy-to-understand manner. See Figure 4.

Education. NWD Systems can inform and educate the public and the aging and disability network about LTSS and benefits, including MIPPA-funded programs, through webinars, professional development, and recurring meetings. Efforts to increase awareness of the programs include informing professionals about the benefits and services available through a state's NWD System, as well as person-centered approaches. An example is **Missouri**'s Open Door Benefit Series for professionals, which includes recorded webinars on Medicare low-income subsidies, preventive benefits, and SHIP services.

Referral Partnerships. NWD Systems can improve outreach when activities to increase awareness of LTSS and benefit programs are coordinated across a state's full network of referral partners, with MIPPA-funded entities as key participants in that network. Additionally, because these efforts align with MIPPA, they can more effectively connect people to programs that improve access to Medicare financial assistance programs and preventive benefits. Strategies can include community events and direct engagement, such as through presentations in a library or a senior or community center. It can also include training and collaboration with trusted partners like BECs, SHIPs, VA facilities, state agencies, and health care providers. For example, the annual **Texas** MIPPA conference brings together benefits counselors statewide to share information on Medicare, Medicaid, Dual-Eligible Special Needs Plans, fraud and scams, and guidance on housing, evictions, and other legal issues. Additionally, best practices from AAAs, ADRCs, and 211 programs are shared, along with lessons learned and ways to strengthen referrals, coordination, and the NWD approach. See Texas No Wrong Door.

Summary

Increasing awareness of LTSS and benefit programs depends on strong partnerships, consistent messaging, and coordinated access to benefits. By integrating initiatives that promote uptake of financial assistance programs and other benefits into a state's NWD System, such as MIPPA, states can help older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers learn about programs that can improve their health, independence, and financial security.

For additional information on NWD Systems outreach and marketing, see the Administration for Community Living's "Opening Every Door: Marketing State No Wrong Door Systems to Expand Access".

This publication was supported by the Administration for Community Living (ACL), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling $13,504,196.00 with 100 percent funding by ACL/HHS. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by ACL/HHS or the U.S. Government.