

*Office of the Governor*  
**NEWS RELEASE**

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**DiFRANCESCO CAPS FIRST 100 DAYS BY SIGNING  
PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFIT PLAN FOR MIDDLE-INCOME SENIORS**  
*Landmark "Senior Gold" is One of First in Nation to Provide Benefits for Middle-Income  
Seniors*

Acting Governor Donald T. DiFrancesco today signed the Senior Gold Prescription Discount Act, A-2765/S-6 - which he authored - into law making New Jersey one of the first states in the nation to provide prescription drug benefits to middle-income seniors and disabled individuals.

"This is an historic day for New Jersey's seniors. The landmark Senior Gold program will provide a much-needed discount on prescription drugs to the more than 100,000 middle-income seniors and disabled persons who are currently falling through the cracks.

"One hundred days ago, I made a promise to make healthcare affordable for seniors. I am proud to honor that commitment. Prescription drug assistance for seniors is still being debated in Washington, but, here in New Jersey, we've created a program that is both responsible and compassionate, funded with money we receive from the national tobacco settlement," stated DiFrancesco.

Under Senior Gold, participants are responsible for a \$15 co-pay while the state picks up 50 percent of the remaining cost. For those individuals whose out-of-pocket drug costs exceed \$2,000 and for couples whose costs exceed \$3,000, the state pays the entire cost after the co-payment. Additionally, the plan allows seniors and disabled persons to use the pharmacy of their choice for benefits.

"Back in 1975, New Jersey was the first state to provide a prescription drug plan for low-income seniors and now, in 2001, we are yet again in the national forefront of pharmaceutical assistance plans with our middle-income Senior Gold program.

"Too many seniors are faced with the tough choice of whether to buy food or medicine. With Senior Gold, they won't have to make those choices. Seniors and people with disabilities will receive the drugs they need to stay healthy without worrying about how to pay for them," said DiFrancesco.

Seniors and disabled individuals can obtain applications for Senior Gold benefits, which begin on June 1, 2001, by calling 1-800-792-9745 or writing: "Senior Gold, P.O. Box 724, Trenton, NJ 08625." Additionally, applications for this program will be available at local pharmacies, senior centers, County Offices on Aging and via the New Jersey Department of Health and Human Services website at [www.state.nj.us/health](http://www.state.nj.us/health).

The Senior Gold Prescription Discount Act was sponsored by DiFrancesco and Senator Martha Bark (R-Atlantic/Burlington/Camden) and Assemblymen Francis Blee (R-Atlantic) and John Gibson (R-Cape May/Atlantic/Cumberland).

## **Senior Gold Fact Sheet**

### **What is Senior Gold?**

Senior Gold is a new prescription assistance program for New Jersey seniors and people with disabilities signed into law May 15, 2001, by acting Governor Donald T. DiFrancesco, one of the bill's primary sponsors in the State Senate.

### **When will Senior Gold begin and what will it do?**

Starting June 1st, Senior Gold will provide prescribed medication (including insulin, insulin needles, certain diabetic testing materials and syringes, and needles for injectable medicines used for the treatment of multiple sclerosis) to eligible state residents for \$15 per prescription plus one half the cost of the prescription.

### **What happens if my annual out-of-pocket prescription costs are very high?**

Once out-of-pocket prescription costs reach \$2,000 for a single person or \$3,000 for a married couple in any given program year, those beneficiaries will pay just the \$15 per prescription co-payment for the remainder of that year. This benefit is known as a catastrophic cap.

### **Who is eligible for Senior Gold?**

Eligible state residents include people who are at least 65 years old or those receiving Social Security Title II disability benefits with incomes between \$19,238 and \$29,238 if single and between \$23,589 and \$33,589 if married. These income limits are \$10,000 higher than the state's very popular Pharmaceutical Assistance to the Aged and Disabled (PAAD) program.

### **How many people will benefit from Senior Gold?**

Senior Gold will provide approximately 100,000 moderate-income seniors and people with disabilities living in New Jersey with prescription coverage they currently lack.

### **How do people apply for Senior Gold?**

Applications for Senior Gold can be found at local pharmacies, senior citizen centers, County Offices on Aging, the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services' website at [www.state.nj.us/health](http://www.state.nj.us/health), or by writing to: Senior Gold, P.O. Box 724, Trenton, NJ 08625. The program's toll-free telephone number is 1-800-792-9745.

### **Can people apply for Senior Gold with a PAAD application form?**

There are separate applications for each program, however, when a PAAD application indicates the person may be eligible for Senior Gold, it may be used to enroll the person in Senior Gold upon their request.

### **Are all drugs covered under Senior Gold?**

Like PAAD, Senior Gold only covers prescription medications that have been approved by the federal Food and Drug Administration. Drugs purchased outside the State of New Jersey are not covered, nor are pharmaceutical products produced by manufacturers that have not signed a rebate agreement with the State of New Jersey.

**How is Senior Gold funded?**

Senior Gold is funded from monies paid by tobacco companies to New Jersey as part of the master settlement agreement reached between the companies and most states.

**Is New Jersey prepared to administer Senior Gold?**

The Department of Health and Senior Services has a team of 60 people in place ready to process Senior Gold applications and provide customer service. State pharmacists, County Offices on Aging and other important organizations have been made aware of the program and are ready to help seniors and people with disabilities learn about and apply for this new service.

**What is the maximum supply of prescriptions Senior Gold provides?**

All first-time prescriptions are limited to a 34-day supply. Both Senior Gold and PAAD allow for refills up to a 34-day supply or 100 unit doses, whichever is greater.

**Must Senior Gold participants use generic drugs?**

Generic drugs are less costly substitutes with the same active ingredients as drugs sold under a brand name. New Jersey has established a list of generic drugs that must be dispensed whenever a brand name has been prescribed. Prescribing physicians must write "Brand Name Medically Necessary" on a prescription to require the dispensing of some brand name drugs when a generic is available. If a doctor prescribes a brand name and permits substitution, but the Senior Gold or PAAD participant prefers a specific brand name medication, he or she may obtain the brand name by paying the difference between the cost of that generic drug and the brand name, along with the co-payment.

**What safeguards are in place to protect Senior Gold participants from medication errors?**

Every prescription a Senior Gold participant brings to the pharmacy will be logged into a computer and checked to ensure it does not interact harmfully with other drugs, that the dosage is not too large, and that the drug therapy does not go on for too long a time or duplicates the effects of other drugs. This safeguard will not prevent Senior Gold participants from obtaining any medicine their doctor believes to be medically necessary.

**Will PAAD recipients who go over the program's income limits automatically be transferred to Senior Gold?**

No. Participants must notify the PAAD program and return their PAAD eligibility card. PAAD will then transfer their eligibility to Senior Gold only with their consent.

**How will Senior Gold participants know when they have reached the out-of-pocket expense maximum cap?**

The pharmacy point-of-sale computer calculates each participant's out-of-pocket expenses. The pharmacist will be notified of the amount of the co-payment and tell the participant.

**Are co-payments for other prescription insurance included as out-of-pocket expenses applied to the maximum cap?**

Yes, as long as the person is already enrolled in Senior Gold.