

# Rx program will help with costs

Last fall, health-care issues were front and center during the campaigns for president and Indiana governor, with a particular focus on issues regarding the soaring costs of prescription drugs.

Now that the campaign season is over, the debate has silenced quite a bit. But, there is no question that the cost of prescription drugs continues to be a crucial issue facing Hoosiers, particularly our senior citizens.

On March 8, more than 60 health-care, community, and consumer groups, along with Gov. Mitch Daniels, launched the Rx for Indiana program designed to help Hoosiers deal with the high cost of prescription drugs.

The Rx for Indiana program is simple to use and creates one clearinghouse to link Hoosiers with pharmaceutical-assistance programs for which they may be eligible.

Rx for Indiana consists of two major components: an easy-to-use, confidential Web site ([www.RxforIndiana.org](http://www.RxforIndiana.org)), and a toll-free call center at (877) 793-0765 for folks who do not have a computer.

Both the toll-free number and the Web site are equipped to deal with Spanish-speaking customers. Also, the call center is accessible for the deaf and hearing-impaired through Relay Indiana.

Rx for Indiana is a very significant effort on the part of Gov. Mitch Daniels and his administration, the pharmaceutical industry, and others to help remove the barriers that may have prevented low-income or senior Hoosiers from accessing pharmaceutical-assistance programs.

The Web site, modeled after state government programs utilized in Idaho and Ohio, allows people to



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access low-cost prescription drug programs by simply inputting some basic information on a computer.

Indiana residents answer a few short eligibility questions, and the Web site or trained operator identifies the pharmaceutical

patient-assistance programs for which they may qualify.

The Web site provides residents with the information they need to enroll in appropriate prescription-assistance programs and allows them to download and print applications online.

Callers to the toll-free number are guided through a series of questions by a trained operator, who then forwards the program applications directly to the caller.

Rx for Indiana was created to build upon the national success of pharmaceutical patient-assistance programs, which provided more than 22 million prescriptions with an estimated wholesale value of more than \$4 billion in 2004.

Patient-assistance programs were developed by pharmaceutical companies to ensure patients have access to the prescription medications they need. Some have been in existence for as long as 50 years.

Already, the program is showing that individual Hoosiers can save hundreds of dollars on their medications. For example, by utilizing the Web site, a married Hoosier making \$24,000 a year or less can obtain the popular cholesterol-lowering medication Zocor for no cost, and it is delivered directly from the

company to the person's front door.

A one-month supply of Zocor costs, on average, \$130 at the pharmacy. All told, Rx for Indiana provides eligible residents access to more than 275 prescription-assistance programs and more than 1,800 medications.

The governor has started a volunteer program for individuals willing to travel to communities and help educate people about the Rx for Indiana program. If you would like to volunteer for the training necessary to help others access prescription-assistance programs through Rx for Indiana please call (877) 483-9275.

Also, all 92 county officers of the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration and many of the Indiana Area Agencies on Aging offices have staff available to help answer questions relating to Rx for Indiana.

In addition, I plan to host a local Rx for Indiana town hall meeting to discuss this important program later this summer.

Rx for Indiana partners, such as Eli Lilly and Company, have agreed to travel to our district to attend a public forum or other meeting of senior citizens and other residents to provide greater information about the Rx for Indiana program.

As Gov. Daniels has stated on many occasions, this system will allow Hoosiers to find prescription medications at savings of up to hundreds of dollars a month. It's safe, it's secure, and these medications can be delivered to your doctor's office, pharmacy or right to your front door.

Messer is executive director of the Indiana Republican Party and represents District 57, including most of Shelby County, in the Indiana House.