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Medicare Part D:
On-line Trainings Available

Western New York Law Center (Buffalo, NY), Selfhelp Community Services, Inc., and Empire Justice Center (Rochester, Albany, White Plains, NY) have made 2 additional trainings available for viewing over the web by attorneys and staff. There is no charge for viewing these trainings, but everyone who wishes to view these trainings must register. There is a processing fee for CLE credit requests. These trainings are available immediately:

Medicare Part D - Part I - (2008) Basics About Part D

This training covers almost everything social workers and advocates needs to know to assist their clients with the Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit ("Part D").

It assumes no existing background in Part D.

Topics covered include: How Part D fits in with the rest of Medicare, what kinds of plans there are, how the basic benefit is structured; how much it costs; what drugs are covered; "Extra Help" - the Low Income Subsidy that makes Part D more affordable for people of limited means (including those who are automatically eligible); and how much help it provides. Lastly, there is a discussion of how to use Part D: When can participants enroll or change plans; creditable coverage and the

Late Enrollment Penalty; automatic enrollment, how Part D works with EPIC, Medicaid, and other coverage; and the exceptions and appeals process.

Date of original presentation: 11/05/07

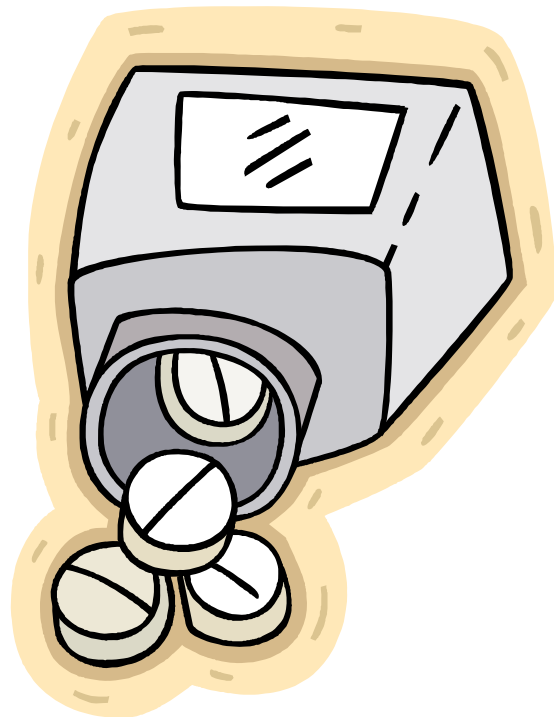Presenters: David Silva and Sarah Steege

Viewing time: 2 hours 32 minutes

If you do not want CLE credit for watching this training, there is no charge. If you want New York State CLE credit, you may receive 3.0 hours of CLE credits for Professional Practice. The cost of CLE is $60.00 for Not-for-Profit Agencies; $90.00 for Private Practice Attorneys.

Medicare Part D - Part 2 (2008) -- Using the Online Plan-finder for 2008 Enrollment, Part D Plans in New York State, More on Medicaid and EPIC and Part D

This training is an update for those who are already familiar with Medicare Part D, covering only changes to look out for in 2008. Those who have not already taken a training session on Part D should attend the Overview training first. First, the training covers of how to use PlanFinder on the Medicare website to compare and select drug plans. Then it covers changes to the basic benefit, the landscape of plans, reassignment, redeeming, and redetermination.

Date of original presentation: 11/12/07

Presenter: David Silva

Viewing time: 2 hours 30 minutes

Again, if you do not want CLE credit for watching this training, there is no charge. If you want New York State CLE credit, you may receive 3.0 hours of CLE credits for Professional Practice. The cost of CLE is $60.00 for Not-for-Profit Agencies; $90.00 for Private Practice Attorneys.

To view the trainings…

- Start up your web browser and go to this location: http://onlineresources.wnylc.net
- On the left side of the screen, click on "Online Training"
- Click on the desired training; a registration form will be displayed
- Fill out the registration form; then click on "Submit form"
- A link to the presentation will be sent to the email address provided in the registration form

The trainings are in Windows Media Player format. Most machines come with Media Player installed, and there are versions available for Macintosh machines. The trainings are set up so that the video appears in the browser. There is a separate link available if you want to view the video in a separate window. Firefox users will have to add a plug-in to view the video in the Firefox browser, but it might be easier to just click on the link that allows you to see the video in a separate window.

There is also a link to open the training materials in a separate window. We suggest printing the training materials out before watching the video.

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Vista Service Pack 1: Coming Soon

Final release of the long-awaited Vista Service Pack 1 (SP1) is slated for the first quarter of next year. The recent release of "Release Candidate 2" of SP1 is viewed by most IT pundits as a strong indication that it will occur on schedule. (In Microsoft terms "Release Candidate" is the final stage of testing before a product is officially released)

Generally speaking, the release of the first service pack is an important milestone in a product's evolution. It signals that the product has reached a certain level of maturity. Most IT industry analysts routinely advise companies to hold off on implementation of new software products until the first service pack has been released.

Well, the release of Vista Service Pack 1 is almost upon us.

What's in Service Pack 1?

According to Microsoft, the goal of SP1 is to "address key feedback from its customers without regressing application compatibility". In other words, they tried to fix the things that users were complaining about, but added very few new features.

On Microsoft's web site, the list of "improvements" seems almost endless. Instead of regurgitating the entire list in this article, we have only included the items that would be meaningful to mainstream computer users.

Reliability Improvements:

- More device drivers. Many users who moved to Vista when it was first released found that many of the devices attached to their computers didn't work, since Vista provided no drivers for those devices — especially networkable printers.
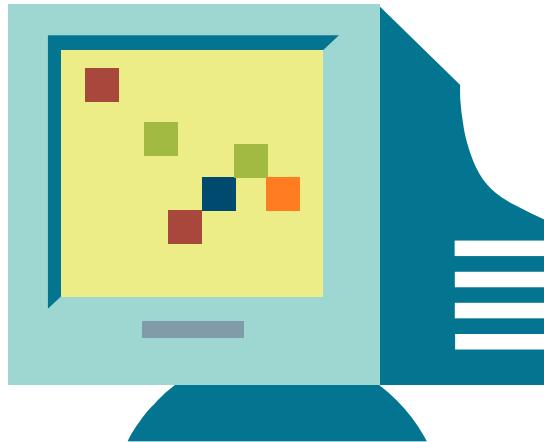
  The way that device drivers work within Vista is different from other operating systems. Everything needed to be rewritten. In the initial release of Vista, 20,000 device drivers were supported. Since then, an additional 13,000 have become available.

- Improved compatibility and reliability with newer graphics cards

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- Improved reliability when working with external monitors connected to a laptop

- Fewer network configuration issues

- Improved reliability of computer systems that were upgraded to Vista from XP

- Fewer problems with Vista when entering or returning from sleep mode.

- Corrected problem with printing to local printers from a Windows Terminal Services session.

- Includes changes to enable third-party desktop search engines – Google, in particular – to be more easily designated as the default search tool by users

- Microsoft recently announced that SP1 will eliminate many of Vista's most annoying features – like Windows Genuine Advantage's so-called "kill switch," which disables features of the operating system when it appears to be counterfeit. Many users have been outraged when Vista downgraded the behavior of legally licensed copies in error.

Performance Improvements:

- Faster file copying and extraction.

- Internet Explorer performance will be improved.

- Improved battery life on laptops

- Corrected the problem that caused delays when attempting to logon to a network

- Corrected the problem that caused sluggish performance and excessive CPU and bandwidth usage when browsing shared files.

Support for Future Hardware and Standards:

- Vista SP1 will add support for the exFAT file system. In the future, flash memory storage and other consumer devices are expected to use this file system.

- Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) for Direct3D 10.1 protocol will be added to allow developers of 3D applications a better method to take advantage of Direct3D-compatible hardware.

Is there anything that Microsoft didn't fix in Vista?

There will still be work to do. According to several articles, users should not expect any improvement in the following:

- User Account Control messages. The annoyance factor still remains high.

- Vista will still demand large amounts of memory (RAM) to run efficiently. In order to receive reasonable performance, computers need at least 2 GB of RAM.

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How will Vista SP1 be deployed?

When Vista Service Pack 1 is released next year, users will be able to install it by one of three possible methods:

- Express: This method requires a reasonably fast Internet connection, but only downloads the changes that are actually needed by that computer. If the user had previously installed any updates to Vista, this update method would not attempt to re-install them. The total size of this update is approximately 50 Megabytes.

- Stand-alone: This method is recommended for computers that do not have an Internet connection or can only connect to the Internet via dialup. This update package is extremely large since it contains every Vista update that was ever released for every different language version of Vista.

- Slipstream: At some point in the future, Service Pack 1 will be incorporated into the Vista installation media. If you already have Vista installed, this update method is not an option for you.

What needs to be done to install SP1?

To install the Express or Stand-alone service packs, Microsoft recommends the following:

- There must be 7 GB (Gigabytes) of space available on the computer to be updated. Most of this space will be returned after the update has completed successfully.

- To install the Stand-alone service pack, the user must have Administrative privileges.

- If SP1 is being installed on a laptop, it should be plugged into an AC power source.

The "Release Candidate" version of SP1 is available. Should end-users install it?

Unless you are having intolerable problems with Vista, it would be best to wait. A "Release Candidate" is not an official version of the software product. Microsoft will not provide end-users with any meaningful support.

The reason that Microsoft creates beta and release candidate versions of its software is to allow software vendors and very large IT organizations a chance to find more bugs. If you install it and you encounter problems, you are pretty much on your own.

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WNYLC Web Statistics For November 2007

Total Hits…......................………293,022
Number of Pages Viewed........…..…..85,231
Total Visitors....................…….…44,421
Average Hits/Day…......…….……….9,767
Average Pages /Day……….……..…….2,841
Top Web Browsers Used:
Internet Explorer 7.x……………….......35%
Internet Explorer 6.x…………………...47%
Firefox.........….……………..……....11%
Safari..............…….………………..…1%

Top 5 Operating Systems Used:
Windows XP......................…......……74%
Windows 2000...........……..…………....8%
Windows Vista.................…………….6%
Windows 98..........................………...2%
Mac OS..................…….………....…2%

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