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SilverSneakers Gym Memberships, Part 1

Some time ago, we contacted the offices of Healthways SilverSneakers, in an attempt to learn more about their program. Healthways SilverSneakers is a national program that helps older adults take greater control of their health by engaging in physical activity. We understand that SilverSneakers is a benefit offered to members of many Medicare plans across the U.S., and to group retirees. The program provides for a basic fitness center membership within a participating gym. This means that SilverSneakers members **are not required** to pay out of pocket costs for basic gym memberships because the health plan provider has agreed to pay for the participant's membership. Yet, we have found that there have been occasions in which SilverSneakers participants have been targeted by gym sales personnel and were subject to pressure to purchase additional services such as Personal Training packages. In the event a SilverSneakers member expresses interest in other additional services, the gym's representative must ensure that the SilverSneakers member is aware that additional services require an extra cost which may not be covered by the health plan provider. If the SilverSneakers member does not express an interest in additional services, the member should not be subject to pressure to purchase such services.

Gym owners should also be aware that every SilverSneakers member is required to sign a membership agreement regardless of how the membership dues will be paid. This is because Georgia law mandates that every gym member, whether they are a SilverSneakers member or not, sign a written agreement or contract. Gyms should never assume that because SilverSneakers memberships are short term memberships, that they are not required to sign a written agreement. If your facility participates in the SilverSneakers program and you have questions on these matters, please feel free to contact us.

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