

Medicaid Limits Increase for 2008

Denver, CO. Medicaid is a program designed to help low income individuals receive health care. Medicaid covers many of the costs that are not covered by Medicare. The program's limits increase annually with the Social Security cost of living adjustment. Medicaid pays for custodial care in a nursing home, while Medicare pays for rehabilitative care in a nursing home. Medicaid also pays for co-pays for hospital and doctor visits that Medicare does not cover.

Medicaid is available to many low income individuals who need assistance with health care and long term care. Individuals who are age 65 or disabled and whose monthly income is less than \$637 (couples \$956) for 2008 and who have less than \$2000 (couples \$3000) in resources are eligible for Supplemental Security Income or SSI. Individuals who receive SSI automatically receive Medicaid. Some individuals who receive SSI also receive Social Security and Medicare.

Individuals who are over age 60 and whose income is less than \$662 (couples \$1324) and whose resources are less than \$2000 (couples \$3000) can qualify for Old Age Pension or OAP, a program funded by the State of Colorado. OAP recipients also receive some health care coverage which is similar to Medicaid for physician visits, prescriptions, and hospital care.

Other individuals qualify for some benefits through the Medicare Savings Program. For individuals whose income is between \$663 and \$850 (less than \$1141 for a couple) and whose resources are less than \$4000 (couples \$6000), the Medicare Savings Program pays for the Medicare Part B premium, the co-pays for Medicare physician and hospital visits, and the Medicare deductibles. For those individuals whose income is between \$851 and \$1148 (less than \$1570 for a couple) and whose resources are less than \$4000 (couples \$6000), the Medicare Savings Program will pay the Medicare Part B premium.

Many low income individuals need home care or assisted living services, but are unable to pay for these services. In 2008, individuals whose income is less than \$1911 and who have less than \$2000 in resources may qualify for home and community based services (HCBS). Individuals must also meet functional guidelines and demonstrate a need for assistance with bathing, eating or dressing, or have problems with mobility and transferring. Those who are incontinent, need supervision because they are a danger to self or others, or who need medication management may also be eligible for Medicaid in Nursing Homes or Assisted Living. These individuals must be deemed eligible for nursing home care within thirty days if they do not receive services.

Individuals who need custodial care in a nursing home, but who are not able to pay are eligible for Medicaid, if they have less than \$5546 in income and less than \$2000 in resources. At this income level, a Medicaid Qualifying Trust is required.

The income requirements for a married person are the same as for an individual for HCBS or nursing home care. However, the “community spouse” is allowed to keep \$104,400 in resources; while the “sick” spouse is allowed to keep an additional \$2000. The community spouse is allowed to keep a minimum of \$1711 and up to a maximum of \$2610 of the joint income depending on excess shelter needs.

Some individuals whose income is more than \$1911 but less than \$5546 (\$5995 in metro Denver), can qualify for a Medicaid Qualifying Trust (or Miller Trust) and still be eligible to receive Medicaid for nursing home care or HCBS. The individual is required to establish a trust with the State of Colorado as the beneficiary. Any funds not used by the individual become the property of the state when the trust is dissolved, usually at death.

SSI eligible persons apply for benefits through the Social Security Administration. Applications for OAP and Medicare Savings Program are determined by income and resources through the county department of social/human services by completing the Medicaid application. Assistance for HCBS and nursing home care requires a financial application to be submitted to the county department of social/human services, as well as a functional application to be completed by the “Options for Longterm Care” agency responsible for the county in which the individual will be residing.

Although a complicated program with many different eligibility requirements depending on individual circumstances, Medicaid is a resource for those low income individuals needing health care. For assistance with Medicaid counseling, call the county department of social/human services or 303-333-3482.