



Press Release

For More Information
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Help Is Available for Low Income Persons with Medicare Out of Pocket Costs

Denver, CO. Low income individuals are eligible for help with the high out of pocket Medicare costs. Starting March 1, 2009, more low income individuals will be eligible for assistance with deductibles, co-payments, and premiums for Medicare Part B and D through the Medicare Savings Program and the Low Income Subsidy or Extra Help. The Medicare Savings Programs are: the Qualified Medicare Benefit (QMB), Special Low Income Medicare Benefit (SLIMB), and Qualified Individual -1 (QI-1).

Individuals who have monthly incomes of \$903 or less and assets of less than \$4000 are eligible for the QMB (less than \$1215 in income and \$6000 in assets for couples). Those who are eligible can receive help with the Medicare Part B premium of \$96.40 that is deducted from the individual's Social Security check, the Part A deductible of \$1068 for hospital care, and the Part B of \$135 for doctor and other services, as well as the 20% co-payment for Medicare approved charges.

These individuals are automatically eligible for help with the Part D premium for prescription drugs (if they select a qualifying plan). In addition, they pay \$1.10 for generic prescriptions and \$3.20 for name brand prescriptions. Also, these individuals are not subject to the deductibles and the coverage gap (or doughnut hole) for out-of-pocket costs for prescription drugs.

A second group of eligible individuals are those who qualify for the SLIMB. These are individuals whose monthly income is between \$904 and \$1083 and who have less than \$4000 in assets (between \$1216 and \$1456 for couples in monthly income and less than \$6000 in assets) are eligible to receive help with the Medicare Part B premium. These individuals are also eligible to receive assistance with the cost of prescriptions including no premiums for qualifying plans, no deductibles and coverage through the doughnut hole, as well as only paying \$1.10 for generic prescriptions and 43.20 for brand name prescriptions.

The third group of individuals who are eligible are those who qualify for the QI-1 program who have monthly incomes between \$1084 and \$1238 and whose resources are less than \$4000 for single persons (couples who have incomes of between \$1457 and \$1662 and less than \$6000 in benefits) are also eligible with the Medicare Part B premium of \$96.40. In addition, they enjoy the same help with prescription drug coverage as the other two groups.

For all of these programs, assets include such things as cash, savings, stocks and bonds, mutual funds, and money markets. Assets that are excluded are the home (if the equity value is less than \$500,000), a term life insurance, an irrevocable burial policy, and automobile.

To apply for the Medicare Savings Programs, the individual needs to complete the Medicaid application with the county department of human services. For your county department of social services phone number or any questions, call 303-333-3482.

Some individuals who have more income and assets and do not qualify for the any of the Medicare Savings Program benefits, may still qualify for help with prescription drugs through the Low Income Subsidy or Extra Help program.

Starting March 1, 2009, individuals who have monthly incomes less than \$1215 (couples with less than \$1639 per month) and less than \$8100 in assets (less than \$12,910 for couples) qualify for full Extra Help with prescription drugs. Those who qualify for full Extra Help pay no monthly premium, no deductible, and only \$2.40 for generics and \$6 for name brands.

Some individuals will also qualify for partial Extra Help. To qualify for partial Extra Help, individuals must make between \$1215 and \$1354 per month (\$1639 and \$1822 for a couple) in income with resources below \$12,510 for a single person and (\$25,010 for a couple). Those qualifying for this program will pay a \$60 deductible, 15% co-insurance and \$2.40 for generics and \$6 for brand names.

To enroll in the Full or Partial Extra Help program, individuals must sign up with the Social Security Administration at 1-800-772-1213 or at www.ssa.gov.

Individuals who need help with filing the Medicaid application or the Social Security application can call 303-333-3482.

Eileen Doherty, M.S. is the Executive Director of Senior Answers and Services and the Colorado Gerontological Society. She has more than 35 years of experience in gerontology in administration, research, training and education, and clinical practice. She can be reached at 303-333-3482 or at doherty001@att.net.