

Are you caught in the “Medi’s Maze”? We hope this new section will establish a User’s Guide for Medicaid and Medicare by answering common questions and addressing key issues. Let’s look at the basics.

Medicaid

How Does it Work? Medicaid is a program funded by states and the federal government to provide various insurance coverages for low-income citizens including families, children, elderly and the disabled. There are income and other eligibility requirements to qualify for Medicaid. These vary from state to state. Medicaid sends payments directly to your health care providers rather than to the participant. You may be required to make a co-pay with certain types of procedures. General coverage includes hospital services, physician services, lab and x-rays, some home health care and dental for children.

Who’s Covered?

Many groups of people are covered by Medicaid. Within these groups, though, certain requirements must be met. These may include: age, whether you are pregnant, disabled, blind, or aged; your income and resources (like bank accounts, property, or other cash assets); and whether you are a U.S. citizen or a lawfully admitted immigrant (There is a 5 year rule for lawful immigrant). There are special rules for those who live in nursing homes and for disabled children living at home. In general, you should apply for Medicaid if your income is low and you match one of the descriptions of the Eligibility Groups. Medicaid will assign to case worker to evaluate your situation.

Low-income is only one test for Medicaid eligibility. As noted earlier, categorically needy persons who are eligible for Medicaid may or may not also receive cash assistance from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program or from the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program. Medically needy persons who would be



categorically eligible except for income or assets may become eligible for Medicaid solely because of excessive medical expenses.

Medicare

Medicare insurance is the nation’s largest health insurance program. Medicare coverages include people age 65 and over, disabled persons under 65 and persons with special clinical circumstances.

Medicare – A and B Medicare insurance has two parts: Part A, Hospital Insurance and Part B, Medical Insurance. Part A is usually fully funded for participants over the age of 65 and pays for such services as hospital care, nursing facilities, and hospice. This part of Medicare coverage has no premium because as the participant or their spouse was working in their early years, they paid it through Medicare taxes. If Medicare insurance taxes were not paid, one may still be eligible to pay a premium for Part A. Part B pays for such Medicare services as physician, outpatient hospital, and therapists that are medically necessary.

Additions to Medicare are the Prescription Coverage Now Act of 2007, which will make it easier for low-income older people and people with disabilities to obtain help in paying the cost-sharing for their Medicare prescription drug coverage.

When Will Medicare Cover Skilled Nursing Care?

Medicare will cover skilled care only if all of the following are true:

1. You have Medicare Part A (Hospital Insurance) and have days left in your benefit period available to use.
2. You have a qualifying hospital stay. This means an inpatient hospital stay of 3 consecutive days or more, not including the day you leave the hospital. You must enter the SNF within 30 days of leaving the hospital. After you leave the SNF, if you re-enter the same or another SNF within 30 days, you don't need another 3-day qualifying hospital stay to get additional SNF benefits. This is also true if you stop getting skilled care while in the SNF and then start getting skilled care again within 30 days.
3. Your doctor has decided that you need daily skilled care. It must be given by, or under the direct supervision of, skilled nursing or rehabilitation staff. If you are in the SNF for skilled rehabilitation services only, your care is considered daily care even if these therapy services are offered just 5 or 6 days a week.
4. You get these skilled services in a SNF that has been certified by Medicare.
5. You need these skilled services for a medical condition that:
 - Was treated during a qualifying 3-day hospital stay, or
 - Started while you were getting

Medicare-covered SNF care (i.e. *If you are in the SNF because you had a stroke, and you fall and sprain your wrist.*)

For more information:

1-800-MEDICARE or
www.medicare.gov

Centers for Medicare and
Medicaid Services / Department
of Health and Human Services



What is Medicare Part D?

The Medicare Part D program provides beneficiaries with assistance paying for prescription drugs. The drug benefit, added to Medicare by the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003, (MMA),¹ began in January 2006. Unlike coverage in Medicare Parts A and B, Part D coverage is not provided within the traditional Medicare program. Instead, beneficiaries must affirmatively enroll in one of many hundreds of Part D plans offered by private companies. The Annual Enrollment Period for Part D runs from November 15 – December 31. During this period people with Medicare can enroll in a plan or change their enrollment from one plan to another.

What is CMS?

CMS is the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. Formerly known as the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA), they are the federal agency responsible for administering the Medicare, Medicaid, SCHIP (State Children's Health Insurance), HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act), CLIA (Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments), and several other health-related programs. Additional information regarding CMS and its programs is available at www.cms.hhs.gov/.

Still have questions? You don't have to turn far. The Social Security Administration has information on all plans. Medicareadvocacy.org is a good resource for information on the plans or go to Benefits.gov. The Department of Social Services (DSS) and Social Security Administration are there for you. You pay for these agencies. Use these resource to your advantage.

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