

Extra Help for Medicare Beneficiaries in Paying for Prescription Drugs for 2012

All people with Medicare are eligible for Medicare prescription drug coverage. Medicare beneficiaries with limited incomes and resources may also be able to get extra help paying for prescription drugs. Beneficiaries that qualify for this extra help will pay no or reduced premiums and deductibles and low co-payments for prescriptions. In addition, they will not have the gap in the standard drug benefit (sometimes called the doughnut hole).

Who is eligible for extra help?

If an individual's income is below \$16,335 (\$22,065 for a married couple living together), the individual should apply for extra help. Even if the annual income is higher, the beneficiary may be eligible. To qualify, there is also resource test of up to \$12,640 for an individual (\$25,260 for a married couple living together). Some resources are not counted, such as a house, a car, life insurance and money for burial expenses.

To apply

Medicare beneficiaries can fill out an application form obtained from the SSA and return it by mail, or submit it in person to the local SSA office or the local Medicaid office.

Beneficiaries can also apply by telephone at 1.800.772.1213 or online at www.ssa.gov.

Beneficiaries, who are eligible for the extra help, including those who are automatically eligible, must also enroll in a Medicare prescription drug plan after October 15 in order to get their drug coverage.

Changes from 2011

In the Fall, CMS mailed several notices to people who received extra help in 2011. These letters are very important and should be saved.

- Loss of Deemed Status (grey letter): This letter was sent to people who no longer **automatically** qualify for extra help. These people can still qualify for extra help by submitting an application to SSA.
- Change in Extra Help Co-payment Letter (orange letter): This letter was sent to people who still qualify for extra help in 2012 and informs them of the changes in their co-payments.
- Reassignment Letter (blue letter): This letter tells individuals that they have been reassigned to a new plan for 2012, unless they choose a new plan on their own.
- Extra Help "Choosers" Notice (tan letter): This notice informs people who get Extra Help and chose a plan on their own that their plan's premium is changing in 2012 and they may have to pay a portion of the plan's premium unless they join a new plan.

Other information resources

For fact sheets on the extra help to pay costs of Medicare's new prescription drug benefit, see the following Web sites:

- Social Security Administration: www.ssa.gov/prescriptionhelp
- Medicare: www.medicare.gov
- Alzheimer's Association: www.alz.org
- National Center for Benefits Outreach and Enrollment www.centerforbenefits.org

For additional information about the benefit, contact leslie.fried@alz.org.

The Alzheimer's Association is the leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer care, support and research.

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