

# Getting Extra Help with Paying for Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Costs

## *Frequently Asked Questions*

### 1. Do I have to pay anything for my prescription drugs under the Medicare Part D benefit? What if I cannot afford these costs?

You usually pay the following for prescription drug coverage in 2017:

- a. monthly premium (average \$35.63),
- b. yearly deductible (maximum \$400), and
- c. copayments or coinsurance for each prescription medication
  - varies by plan based on whether the drug is on the formulary (approved drug list) and what tier it is assigned
  - varies by plan based on where you are in the benefit (full cost in the deductible, lower cost in initial coverage, and a percentage in the donut hole/coverage gap)

Plans can change each of the costs listed above every year. Therefore, it is important to compare drug plan choices during the Annual Election Period from Oct. 15- Dec. 7 every year.

If your income and resources (or assets) are limited, you may qualify for Extra Help, or the low-income subsidy (LIS), in paying for these costs.

### 2. How do I know if I am eligible for Extra Help?

In general, you may qualify for Extra Help in 2017 if:

- Your monthly income is \$1,528 or less if you are single (\$18,330 annual income), or \$2,070 or less if you are married and living with your spouse (\$24,840 annual income).<sup>1</sup> You might qualify even if you have slightly higher income if you provide at least half of the financial support for other relatives living in your household, if you have earnings from work, or if you live in Alaska or Hawaii.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> These amounts include the \$20 per person per month income disregard.

<sup>2</sup> In 2017, Alaskans can qualify for Extra Help with incomes up to \$1,903 monthly for an individual (\$22,830 annually), and \$2,576 monthly (\$30,915) for a couple; in Hawaii, these amounts are \$1,753 monthly for an individual (\$21,030 annually) and \$2,374 monthly for a couple (\$28,485 annually). All amounts include the monthly income disregard noted above.

- Your resources or assets (such as savings accounts or investments) are \$13,820 or less if you are single, or \$27,600 if you are married and living with your spouse. (All asset eligibility limits include a \$1,500 per person burial allowance.)

Visit the [LIS/Extra Help income and asset eligibility chart](#) for a full breakdown of these figures.

### 3. How do I apply for the Extra Help with my prescription drug costs?

You have the option of applying for Extra Help using the forms and process established by the Social Security Administration (SSA) or through a process set up by your state's Medical Assistance (Medicaid) office.

You can complete the SSA paper application form and mail it to:

Social Security Administration  
Wilkes-Barre Data Operations Center  
P.O. Box 1020  
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18767-9910

You can also apply online at <https://www.benefitscheckup.org> or <www.ssa.gov>. Some people don't have to apply to get Extra Help. See the next question to find out who doesn't have to apply.

### 4. What does the term “deemed eligible” mean?

If you are “deemed eligible” it means that you will automatically qualify for a benefit *even though you have not officially applied for it*. In the case of the Medicare Part D, you will be “deemed” automatically eligible for the Extra Help/LIS program if:

- You are enrolled in both Medicare and Medicaid, or
- You are enrolled in Medicare and receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI), or
- You are enrolled in a Medicare Savings Program (MSP), and your state pays your Medicare Part B premiums and maybe some other Medicare costs.

If you are automatically deemed eligible, you should get a letter from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) telling you that you do not have to apply for this Extra Help.

### 5. If I am eligible for Extra Help, will I also be eligible for a Medicare Savings Program (MSP)?

Not necessarily, but SSA sends your completed Extra Help application (once they have determined your Extra Help eligibility) to your state Medicaid agency to start the application process for

Medicare Savings Programs. Each state has its own eligibility rules for the MSPs. This means, you may have to provide more information to your state office to be eligible for MSPs.

Unless you tell them not to (see Question 15 on application), SSA will send your completed Extra Help application to start the MSP application process, regardless of whether your application *was accepted or denied* for Extra Help. This is because in some states you may qualify for MSP even if you are denied Extra Help for financial reasons.

#### 6. Which kinds of documentation must I submit with my Extra Help application form?

You do **not** need to provide copies of any documents (such as checking account statements, tax returns, or paycheck stubs) as proof of eligibility for Extra Help. Your declaration of income and resources is accepted for the Extra Help application process. SSA will compare your answers on the application with other federal agencies' records to confirm your information.

#### 7. Do I need to report in-kind support (things I am given to help me get food or shelter) or the cash value of my life insurance policy?

As of 2010, the SSA no longer counts in-kind maintenance or support as income on the Extra Help application. This means that you do not need to report the monetary value of shelter and food help you get from family members or caregivers as income. Also, you no longer have to report the cash surrender value of your life insurance policy (the amount you could have gotten if you cashed in your life insurance).

**Note:** Some states still count life insurance cash value and in-kind support as income and resources in determining Medicare Savings Program (MSP) eligibility. Knowing the rules in your state will help you gather the information your state Medicaid eligibility office needs to make a decision about your eligibility for Medicare Savings Programs.

#### 8. Is there any place I can go to talk with someone about my situation?

Yes, there are several resources for help:

1. Call SSA at **1-800-772-1213** or visit your local SSA Office,
2. Contact your State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) through the SHIP Resource Center at **1-877-839-2675** or online at [www.shiptacenter.org](http://www.shiptacenter.org),
3. Contact the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) at **1-800-633-4227**, or
4. Contact the ElderCare Locator at **1-800-677-1116**.

**9. My mother does not speak English. Can she fill out the application form in her own language?**

Extra Help applications are available in Spanish and English. In addition, instruction sheets are available in 16 different languages for side-by-side comparisons with the English version of the applications. These languages include: Arabic, Armenian, Chinese, Farsi, French, Greek, Haitian-Creole, Hmong, Italian, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Somali, Tagalog, and Vietnamese. Answers to questions on application forms must be submitted in English, however. Visit the SSA website at [http://socialsecurity.gov/prescriptionhelp/eh\\_otherlanguages.htm](http://socialsecurity.gov/prescriptionhelp/eh_otherlanguages.htm) to access these instruction sheets.

**10. What happens if I do not answer every question on the application form?**

The SSA website will not accept an incomplete online application. Online applications must be complete in order to be submitted.

SSA will accept incomplete paper applications. If you submit an incomplete paper application, SSA will then contact you—or the contact person you listed in the application—by phone or in writing (if they are unable to make contact by phone) to help you complete the form. But be sure to put at least your name, Social Security number, and telephone number on the application so that they know where to contact you.

**11. If someone calls me and says they are from the SSA, how do I know it's a legitimate call?**

If someone calls you for more information necessary to complete the form, be sure this person is actually from the SSA. An SSA employee will not ask for your Social Security Number (unless the number you have given is incorrect). If you are at all suspicious about a call from someone claiming to be from SSA, hang up and call SSA at 1-800-772-1213 to find out if the call was legitimate.

**12. What happens after I submit the application to the SSA?**

After SSA processes your Extra Help application, they will do the following things:

- Send a notice telling you they received your application
- Contact you with additional questions (if application is incomplete or if income information does not match up with other federal records)
- Determine whether you are eligible for Extra Help
- Notify you about whether you are or are not eligible for the Extra Help
- Send your application information to your state Medicaid agency to start your application for a Medicare Savings Program (unless you tell them not to)

It's important you do not complete multiple Extra Help applications. This can cancel out your original application and delay the process. If you are awaiting confirmation or a decision on your eligibility, call Social Security at **1-800-772-1213** to find out the status of your application.

### **13. If SSA says I do not qualify for the Extra Help, can I appeal?**

Yes. If SSA determined that you are not eligible for the Extra Help, you may appeal the decision within 60 days. You can file an appeal request any SSA office in person, by mail, by fax, or by phone (**1-800-772-1213**).