

The Beacon

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Changes to SSI State Supplement Program effective April 1st

SSI (Supplemental Security Income) is a federal program of the Social Security Administration that provides monthly payments to certain individuals 65 or older, blind, or disabled. Massachusetts provides additional money to SSP recipients who live in this state. Until now, the federal government has been directly depositing both payments to peoples' bank accounts or by mailing them checks.

As of April 1st, there will be a new system for receiving SSI payments. If you currently receive one (combined) check from Social Security you will receive a check from Social Security and from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. If you normally have the check deposited in the bank for you, you will see two deposits that will add up to the same amount. The Massachusetts deposit appears as "SSI SUPP". This change allows the state to save money by administering its own payment system.

In sum, your SSI payment will be the same but you will receive payments from the federal government and from Massachusetts. The conversion will occur automatically and your payment totals will not be affected.

If you have any questions about this change, please call the Massachusetts SSP Customer Service Center at 1-877-863-1128.

Qualifying Individual Program Extended

The Qualifying Individual (QI) program allows Medicaid to pay the Medicare Part B premiums for low-income Medicare beneficiaries with incomes between 120 percent and 135 percent of the federal poverty level. This benefit was set to expire February 29, 2012. However, with last month's passage of The Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012, the QI program has been extended through December 31, 2012.

New Format for Electronic Medicare Summary Notice

CMS has developed a new format for Medicare claims on MyMedicare.gov. Beginning March 10, you will be able to view a new claim-based Medicare Summary Notice (MSN) that features

- Clearer language
- Larger fonts
- Consumer-friendly descriptions of medical procedures
- Definitions of claims column headers
- Information on how to check the form for important facts and potential fraud
- New information on how to appeal denied claims

Medicare is making these same improvements to the printed MSNs that you receive in the mail. You will start to see this new format on your printed MSNs in 2013. Please remember that the version Medicare mails to you is still your official MSN, and that appeals still need to be filed in paper. Examples of these new MSNs are attached.

MyMedicare.Gov

MyMedicare.gov is Medicare's web portal for beneficiaries to access their personal Medicare information. CMS has created demo log-ins for advocates to use if they want to become familiar with this tool. The attached info sheet describes what MyMedicare.gov can be used for, and includes information on how to log-in using these demo usernames and passwords.

Request from the Medicare Advocacy Project

The Medicare Advocacy Projects Wants to Hear from You: If you, or someone you know, found out that a hospital admission was for observation, and not inpatient care; was charged for services received while in the hospital; and/or was denied Medicare coverage for a post-hospital skilled nursing facility stay because there was no three-day prior inpatient hospital stay, MAP would like to try to help. MAP would also like to change the law that allows this to happen. To reach MAP, please

call Greater Boston Legal Services, 617-603-1578 or Community Legal Aid: 800-649-3718, Worcester County; 800-639-1109, Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden and Hampshire Counties.

Fraud Alert Regarding Diabetes Supplies

The Office of the Inspector General has issued a fraud alert regarding diabetes supplies schemes. Although the precise method may vary, the scheme generally involves someone pretending to be from the Government, a diabetes association, or even Medicare, calling you. The caller offers "free" diabetic supplies, such as glucose meters, diabetic test strips, or lancets. The caller may also offer other supplies such as heating pads, lift seats, foot orthotics, or joint braces, in exchange for the beneficiaries' Medicare or financial information, or confirmation of this type of personal information. Additionally, you may receive items in the mail that you did not order. Beneficiaries that receive such requests should Report the call to the OIG Hotline at 1-800-HHS-TIPS or online at www.OIG.HHS.gov/fraud/hotline. As part of your report, provide the name of the company that called you, the company's telephone number and address, and a summary of your conversation with the caller.

MASSHEALTH & THE CONNECTOR

MassHealth Drug List Updated

The MassHealth Drug List has been updated. Please refer to the updated summary for more information and other important changes at www.mass.gov/druglist.

MISCELLANEOUS

2012 Federal Poverty Guidelines

MassHealth and Prescription Advantage have instituted new income limits based on the 2012 Federal Poverty Guidelines. Attached you will find updated versions of the following tools:

- MassHealth Income Standards and Federal Poverty Guidelines
- Public Benefit Eligibility Guidelines ("The Pink Sheet")
- Prescription Advantage Rate Sheet
- Medicare Financial Assistance flyer

National Consumer Protection Week Conference

The Federal Reserve Bank of Boston is hosting its 22nd Annual National Consumer Protection Week Conference on April 25th at the Federal Reserve. This is a free event that is open to the public. Sessions will include:

- Debt Collection Tactics and the Law
- Consumer Financial Education Programs
- Everything You Need to Know about Credit Reports and Credit Scores
- The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau

More details and registration information can be found [here](#).

SHINE SPOTLIGHT

Deborah Hollingworth

From Alicia Germain, SHINE Regional Director at the Springfield Department of Elder Affairs:

Deborah Hollingworth is a case manager at Greater Springfield Senior Services and long-time SHINE counselor. Deb is our go-to Masshealth Wizard. She knows Masshealth inside and out as it relates to elders. We consult her on tough Masshealth cases. She has contacts within the MEC to assist as well. She has done a couple trainings during our Monthly meetings on Masshealth topics that we all struggle with. Her clients love her and find her capable and informative. Her staff find her approachable and knowledgeable. She is always willing to answer a question or take a referral from the SHINE counselors.

Deb is a strong asset to the Hampden County team!

If you would like to nominate a counselor for the SHINE Spotlight, contact Chris Ciano at christopher.ciano@state.ma.us.

SHINE EVENTS

Regional Directors' Meeting

Tuesday, March 27, 10am – 2:30pm
Milford Senior Center

Health Benefits University Western Massachusetts

Day 1: Thursday, March 22, 9am – 1pm
Day 2: Thursday, April 5, 9am – 1pm
Northampton Council on Aging
Flyer with additional information is attached
Register at the following [link](#)

OUTSIDE EVENTS

Massachusetts Health Care Training Forums

Wednesday, April 4; Taunton
Friday, April 6; Holyoke
Thursday, April 12; Tewksbury
Wednesday, April 18; Somerville
Friday, April 20; Shrewsbury
Additional details and online registration can be found [here](#).

SNAP and the Aging Network Webinar

Tuesday, March 20, 3 – 4pm

Thursday, March 22, 10 – 11am

Additional details and online registration can be found [here](#).

Five million seniors will experience hunger this year, but only 1 out of every 3 eligible seniors receives SNAP (formerly known as the Food Stamp Program). This webinar from the National Center for Benefits Outreach and Enrollment will discuss:

- The basics of the SNAP benefit.
- Why seniors don't apply for SNAP and what aging network advocates can do about it
- Opportunities to expand your resources to help older adults obtain this valuable benefit

Save the Date: Senior Medicare Patrol Statewide Conference

Friday, May 18, 8am – 4pm

Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel and Trade Center

Marlborough, MA

Postcard is attached

ATTACHMENTS

- Electronic Medicare Summary Notice Part A
- Electronic Medicare Summary Notice Part B
- MyMedicare Demo
- MassHealth Federal Poverty Levels 2012
- 2012-2013 Public Benefit Eligibility Guidelines
- Medicare Financial Assistance flyer
- 2012 Prescription Advantage Rate Sheet
- Health Benefits University Western Mass
- SMP Statewide Conference Postcard

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