

The financial eligibility limits for Extra Help are countable income of about \$1,956.25/month (\$2,643.75 for couples); and countable resources in the amount of \$18,090 (\$36,100 for couples).

If you qualify for Extra Help, you're able to switch drug plans during each of the first three calendar quarters of the year (once each quarter). This should be done *only* to obtain better coverage of the drugs you need.

How Do You Apply For These Benefits?

Applications for a **Medicare Savings Program** are made online, by mail, or in person, with state Income Support Division Offices. Applications for **Extra Help** are made with Social Security: online (www.socialsecurity.gov), in person at your local Social Security office, or by phone at 800-772-1213. You may also get help with applications from agencies including the NM Aging & Disability Resource Center (800-432-2080) and YesNM (800-283-4465).

Questions about Health Benefits?

Call SCLO at (505) 265-2300 or the Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC) at 800- 432-2080

Senior Citizens' Law Office, Inc. is funded by the City of Albuquerque Area Agency on Aging, the New Mexico Civil Legal Services Commission, and NM Aging and Long-Term Services Department.

This information is not intended as a substitute for specific legal advice.

(Reprinted April 2026)



Get Help With Medicare Costs



(Updated Effective 4/1/26)

The Problem of Out-of-Pocket Costs for Medicare Beneficiaries

Medicare is a critically important source of health care coverage for seniors, but beneficiaries are charged for both the coverage itself (in the form of monthly premiums), and for part of the costs of most care they receive. When they obtain services, they usually have "cost-sharing" charges - - deductibles, co-pays, and coinsurance." The total amount of all these charges can be very high.

What Type of Help is Available?

Medicare Savings Programs and Extra Help (a/k/a LIS, the

Low-Income Subsidy) cover some of the out-of-pocket costs in Medicare for lower income beneficiaries. This flyer highlights these *two* types of *public benefits*.

What Are the Medicare Savings Programs?

The three most widely used *Medicare Savings Programs* are: **QMB**, **SLMB**, and **QI**. *These are special, limited, types of Medicaid coverage that cover Medicare premiums and cost sharing, (but not other services).* QMB covers *all* Medicare premiums and cost-sharing; SLMB and QI pay *only* Medicare Part B premiums. However, *eligibility for any of these Medicare Savings Programs automatically qualifies you for the Extra Help benefit (see next page).*

Income eligibility limits for the *Medicare Savings Programs* are shown in the chart below. *Resources* eligibility standards were *eliminated* on 1/1/21.

	INCOME*	RESOURCES
QMB		
Individual	\$1,350/month	No Limit
Couple	\$1,824/month	No Limit
SLMB		
Individual	\$1,616/month	No Limit
Couple	\$2,184/month	No Limit
QI		
Individual	\$1,816/month	No Limit
Couple	\$2,455/month	No Limit

* **These figures include the \$20 disregard.** Eligibility amounts increase each April.

Is All of Your Income Counted in Determining Eligibility?

No, \$20 of income per month is disregarded, as well as, \$65 plus ½ of monthly earnings above \$65, and certain types of income received by Native Americans.

If you think you might be eligible, *apply as soon as possible*; don't wait until you are sick or get hurt.

What is "Extra Help"?

Extra Help, also known as the Low-Income Subsidy (LIS), provides financial help with Medicare prescription drug plan costs (Medicare drug coverage is available only from private plans). Depending on the amount of your countable income and resources, all or part of your plan's premium, deductible, coverage gap or "donut hole," and co-pay costs will be covered.

If you qualify for one of the Medicare Savings Programs, you automatically qualify for Extra Help, with a high level of help. If your countable income is too high to qualify for a Medicare Savings Program, you may still qualify for Extra Help, but with a lesser amount of help. Some resources *are* counted in determining eligibility for Extra Help (but *not*, e.g., your home, a motor vehicle, personal items (such as jewelry and household goods), a burial space, and up to \$1,500 per person for burial expenses).