

When Every Penny Counts, Medicare Savings Plans May Be the Answer

By **JUDITH JONES**, New Futures / NH Alliance for Healthy Aging Advocacy

The New Hampshire Alliance for Healthy Aging Advocacy held listening sessions in August, and we heard some common themes. One consistent message we heard was deep concern about how to pay for basic monthly expenses and that “every penny counts.” If every penny counts in your monthly budget, and you are on Medicare, the Medicare Savings Programs or MSPs may be a way to save on the health care expenses that are not covered by Medicare.

The financial impact of becoming eligible for Medicare is being referred to as the “Medicare Cliff” by some research groups. Medicare costs are significant. In 2024, the monthly Medicare Part B premium is \$174 per month, the Part A and Part B deductibles are \$1,632, and \$240 respectively. Without a Medicare supplemental policy or enrollment in certain types of Medicare Advantage plans, there is a 20% co-payment on many Medicare outpatient services and durable medical equipment as outlined in this brief from the National Council on Aging: assets-us-01.kc-usercontent.com/ffacfe7d-10b6-0083-2632-604077fd4eca/467f43a0-d595-483b-8fdb-be068ab9cbbf/2024_Medicare_Cliff_Report.pdf.

MSPs are Medicaid programs that help to pay for uncovered Medicare costs. New Hampshire’s MSPs include a Qualified Medicare Beneficiary program (QMB) that pays for Part B premiums, deductibles, and co-payments, and two Specified Low-Income Medicare Beneficiary programs (SLMB) and SLMB 135 (also known as QI) that pays for Part B premiums. MSP income eligibility is set at a percentage of the federal poverty limit (FPL), but states have the authority to modify both the income

and resource eligibility standards and expand MSP financial eligibility.

2024 DHHS MSP Financial Eligibility Standards

Program	Pays Medicare	Income Limit 2024	Resource Limit
QMB	Part B, Deductibles, and Co-Payments	100% of FPL \$1,255 Single \$1,704 Married	\$9,430 Single \$14,130 Married
SLMB	Part B	120% FPL \$1,506 Single \$2,044 Married	\$9,430 Single \$14,130 Married
SLMB 135 a/k/a QI	Part B	135% of FPL \$1,695 Single \$2,300 Married	\$9,430 Single \$14,130 Married

More information about MSP eligibility in New Hampshire is available from the Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRC - formerly ServiceLink) at dhhs.nh.gov/programs-services/adult-aging-care/servicelink or you can apply directly at NH EASY at nheasy.nh.gov/.

Unfortunately, the MSPs are underutilized. Research shows that the states with the highest MSP enrollment have increased the financial eligibility limits. Connecticut, the District of Columbia, Hawaii, Indiana, Maine, Massachusetts and New York have adopted higher income limits. Alaska, Arizona, California, Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia (DC), Hawaii, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, and Vermont do not apply asset limits. The number of states expanding MSP eligibility grows every year. If you believe you would benefit from expanded financial eligibility for the MSPs in New Hampshire, please reach out to Judith Jones or Martha McLeod at jjones@new-futures.org and mmcleod@new-futures.org.

This column is a regular feature of Aging Matters. We thank New Futures for the information they provide to keep readers informed on age-related issues at the state level.

Contact Information for National, State and Local NH Elected Officials

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(202) 224-3324
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U.S. Rep Ann Kuster,
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U.S. Senator Jeanne Shaheen,
(202) 224-2841
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U.S. Rep. Chris Pappas,
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Who is My Legislator?

Use these links to find and contact your

- **State Representative:** <https://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/members/>

- **State Senator:** <https://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/senate/members/wml.aspx>

Visit your town or city’s website to find contact information for your local elected officials.