

# Assister Job Aid: Helping someone newly enrolled in Medicare

## **If a Health Connector member is found to be enrolled in Medicare, they are no longer eligible for the same Health Connector benefits:**

- **Subsidized coverage.** If someone is enrolled in health insurance coverage that meets Minimum Essential Coverage (MEC) standards, such as Medicare, they are not eligible for subsidized Health Connector coverage. If someone is found to be enrolled in Medicare during the calendar year, they will lose eligibility for subsidies through the Health Connector for the rest of the year.
- **Unsubsidized coverage.** Individuals enrolled in Medicare cannot sign up for new coverage through the Health Connector, including unsubsidized coverage. In addition, those enrolled in Medicare can no longer renew their unsubsidized coverage through the Health Connector.

Similar to plan year 2019, both subsidized and unsubsidized Health Connector members who are identified as enrolled in Medicare during the 2020 Health Connector Redeterminations and Renewals process, or Health Connector members who update their application to report that they have Medicare, can expect to:

- Stay enrolled in a Health Connector health plan (QHP) through the end of 2019 only
  - *Those found to be eligible for Medicare on their 2020 application only are able to keep their subsidies through the end of this calendar year.*
  - *Those who update their application with Medicare will lose their access to subsidies.*
- Lose their Health Connector coverage for 2020
- Continue their enrollment in Dental plans
- Potentially renew coverage in their same unsubsidized plan directly through their carrier, if the carrier offers the same policy off-Exchange (outside of the Health Connector)
  - *Medicare beneficiaries can also purchase a Medicare Supplement or Medicare Advantage plan to supplement Medicare coverage at specific times of the year. These plans are available through insurance carriers, The Health Connector does not offer these types of plans.*

Separately, enrollment in Medicare does not make someone ineligible for MassHealth. If MassHealth eligible Medicare may become the primary payor and enrollment in Medicare will change how MassHealth coverage works.

People with Medicare may also apply to MassHealth for assistance with Medicare health and drug coverage expenses by completing an application. Ways to apply for MassHealth can be found at <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-masshealth-coverage-for-seniors-and-people-of-any-age-who-need-long-term-care> .

## **How are members notified by the Health Connector?**

If a member is identified as being enrolled in Medicare during Open Enrollment Redetermination and Renewals they may see this information displayed on their Preliminary Eligibility notice.

In addition, the Health Connector routinely sends a letter to members who have been found to be newly enrolled in Medicare benefits outside of the Open Enrollment timeframes.

## **What if other members of the household still need health insurance coverage?**

If a household member becomes newly enrolled in Medicare, there are important steps to take for the other household members to maintain enrollment in coverage.

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If the Medicare-enrolled individual is the **subscriber** on the plan, the process *is slightly different* depending on when they are identified as being, or report becoming, enrolled in Medicare. For example:

- **During the Health Connectors renewal process**, if the Medicare-enrolled individual is the subscriber on the Health Connector plan, the other household members will lose their coverage at the end of the calendar year and will not be auto-renewed for the next year.
- **During other times of the year**, if the Medicare-enrolled individual is the subscriber on the Health Connector plan, they will lose access to subsidies at the beginning of the next month and the subscriber will be placed into an unsubsidized Health Connector plan. If the subscriber was eligible for a ConnectorCare plan prior to their Medicare determination and their spouse or dependent is still eligible for a ConnectorCare plan, that spouse/dependent needs to enroll in a separate ConnectorCare plan. They will not be automatically enrolled and could have a gap in coverage if they do not take action.

In both scenarios, if the spouse or dependent is still eligible for a Health Connector plan, with or without subsidies, they need to proactively enroll back into a Health Connector plan.

Assisters can help the Medicare-enrolled individual and their spouse or dependents by:

- 1) Updating the online application through the Assister Portal or calling Health Connector Customer Service to report the Medicare information.
- 2) Indicating which individual no longer needs insurance coverage.
  - a) If the person newly eligible or enrolled in Medicare is still showing as eligible and/or enrolled, change that person to “not applying”. You can also enter the member’s Medicare information on the health insurance screen.
  - b) Resubmit the application to get a redetermination for the other household members.
  - c) *Remember, if the subscriber is no longer eligible, the entire plan’s enrollment will be cancelled.*
- 3) If the other household members want to continue their Health Connector coverage, they must re-shop and complete the enrollment for a new plan.
  - a) *Advise the remaining household members that they may need to set up a new recurring payment.*

## How to Identify the Head of Household or Subscriber of the plan

The easiest way to find the Head of Household information is from the application summary page on the application. This information is under the contact information section. In addition, all of the mail sent from the Health Connector is addressed to the Primary Subscriber of the household.

## Medicare basics

Medicare is a Federal health insurance program for Individuals age 65 and over and those under age 65 with a disability. Medicare alone is not a comprehensive health insurance plan. Depending on what parts of Medicare an individual enrolls in, they may need to pay for a portion of their medical expenses. Types of Medicare charges include co-pays, deductibles and co-insurance.

Medicare has four parts:

- Part A - Hospital Insurance
- Part B - Medical Insurance and
- Part D - Prescription Drug Coverage
- Part C - Medicare Advantage provides Parts A, B and D through a managed care plan

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## Enrolling In Medicare

Individuals who are receiving Social Security Retirement benefits for any length of time or who have received Social Security Disability benefits for more than 24 months will be automatically enrolled in Part A at no premium cost. Other Medicare-eligible individuals age 65 or older must take action to enroll in Part A.

Medicare-eligible individuals must generally take action to enroll in Medicare Parts B or D (both have a monthly premium cost). If Medicare-eligible individuals don't sign up for Part B or D during their Initial Enrollment Period for Medicare they could end up paying a late enrollment penalty for their Medicare Part B and D coverage in the future.

Individuals can contact the Social Security Administration at 1-800-772-1213 for help with enrolling in Medicare Part A or B. They can also go in person to their local Social Security office or apply on line at [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov) Individuals may also apply on-line for Extra Help (through the LIS Program) to help pay for Medicare D.

Individuals can contact the SHINE program for information about Medicare, assistance with enrolling and to learn about options for relief that may be available to them if they did not sign up for Medicare Part B and D on time and to avoid facing late penalties or lock-out of Medicare. Call 1-800-243-4636, press 3 to reach the regional SHINE office.

Learn more about the Medicare Initial Enrollment Period and find more information about Medicare by visiting: [Medicare.gov](http://Medicare.gov)

## Are there other details about Medicare that Assisters should be aware of?

- The month before Medicare coverage starts, the newly enrolled Medicare member should contact the Health Connector to cancel their Health Connector coverage. This does not happen automatically.
  - The only exception to this is rule is during the Renewals period, when the member will not be renewed with the Health Connector for the following year.
- Enrollment in Medicare Part A (Hospital Insurance) meets the standards for Minimum Essential Coverage (MEC). Enrollment in Medicare Part B (Medical Insurance) alone does not meet MEC standards.
- When helping a Health Connector member who is newly enrolled in Medicare, note that the systems identify everyone who is enrolled in Medicare Part A or Medicare Advantage, whether or not they have to pay for Medicare Part A.
- Individuals who must pay a premium for Medicare Part A may choose whether to enroll in a Health Connector plan or in Medicare, but they may face significant late enrollment penalties if they do not enroll in Medicare when they become eligible. The penalties would apply to Medicare A, B and D upon enrollment.
- In addition, some individuals who neglected to sign up for Medicare when they should have and incurred a penalty may be apply for Equitable Relief until September 2019. Although the program officially ends
- September 30, 2019, CMS has informed staff that it may continue on an informal basis.

## Where can members get help with understanding their Medicare options?

Individuals and families can get free help with understanding Medicare through the SHINE Program (Serving the Health Insurance Needs of Everyone). [mass.gov/health-insurance-counseling](http://mass.gov/health-insurance-counseling)

To make an appointment with a counselor call: 1- 800-AGE-INFO (1-800-243-4636) and press 3. Individuals can also call their town's Council on Aging for help. For more information about Medicare visit the Medicare website at: [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov)