

## Medicare Savings Programs

### What are the Medicare Savings programs (MSPs)?

- There are three different programs: QMB, SLMB and QI. They are called “buy-in programs” because they pay the Part B premium for people with limited incomes who otherwise might not be able to afford Medicare. QMB will also pay for Part A premiums for those who aren’t eligible for free Part A.
- They are part of federal Medicaid, administered by the state Medi-Cal agency.

### How does one apply?

- People with full Medi-Cal are usually automatically enrolled in QMB, if eligible.
- Everyone else must complete a paper application and submit it to the County Medi-Cal processing office in Concord. HICAP has applications and envelopes.

### What are the criteria for qualifying?

- Individuals must be eligible for, although not necessarily enrolled in, both Medicare A and B. It’s possible to apply for Medicare via Social Security while also applying for the MSP program at the County.
- Asset limits for the MSPs are higher than for Medi-Cal and are the same for all three MSPs. (See chart.) If monthly withdrawals of principal and interest are being taken, tax qualified accounts (IRAs, 401Ks, etc.) are not counted as assets, although the withdrawals count as income.
- See chart for income limits. After a \$65 disregard, only half of work income is included in countable income. Income is gross income, before the Part B premium is deducted from the social security benefit.
- Unlike for Medi-Cal, people can’t qualify for these programs by “spending down” their countable income by buying other health insurance such as dental, etc.

<b>2021 Asset limits for all MSP programs, (includes \$1500 burial exp’s)</b>	<b>\$9,470 (Single)</b>	<b>\$14,960 (Married)</b>
• Q-I income Limit	\$1,469 (S)	\$1,980 (M)
• SLMB Income Limit	\$1,308 (S)	\$1,762 (M)
• QMB Income limit	\$1,093 (S)	\$1,472 (M)

### What are the other benefits?

- All programs automatically provide full Low-Income Subsidy (LIS) for drug costs for the year.
- Recipients can change drug or Medicare Advantage plans quarterly through Sept. 30 each year.

### QMB

- This is the only program that pays the Medicare Part A premium. It also pays the Part B premium.
- It is against the law for providers to bill QMB recipients for Medicare deductibles, coinsurance and co-pays, although not all providers may be aware of this.
- Allows immigrants and others with very low incomes who don’t qualify for free Part A to get it.
- Someone can conditionally apply for Part A contingent upon being approved for QMB.
- Those with Medi-Cal should still get QMB if they don’t get free Part A, because only QMB, not Medi-Cal, pays the Part A premium.

### SLMB and QI

- Only pays Part B premium but not Part B coinsurance or for Part A.



**Contra Costa HICAP: 925-655-1393, or 800-434-0222, or 800-510-2020 (from land line only) [www.cchicap.org](http://www.cchicap.org)**

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