

# Information Notice to Couples with an Institutionalized Spouse

Medicaid is an assistance program that may help pay for the costs of your or your spouse's institutional care, home and community based waiver services, or enrollment in a managed long term care plan. The institutionalized spouse is considered medically needy if his/her resources are at or below a certain level and the monthly income after certain deductions is less than the cost of care in the facility.

Federal and State laws require that spousal impoverishment rules be used to determine an institutionalized spouse's eligibility for Medicaid. These rules protect some of the income and resources of the couple for the community spouse.

**Note:** Spousal impoverishment rules do not apply to an institutionalized spouse who is eligible under the Modified Adjusted Gross Income (MAGI) rules.

If you or your spouse are:

1. In a medical institution or nursing facility and are likely to remain there for at least 30 consecutive days;  
or
2. Receiving home and community based services provided pursuant to a waiver under section 1915(c) of the federal Social Security Act and are likely to receive such services for at least 30 consecutive days;  
or
3. Receiving institutional or non-institutional services and are enrolled in a managed long term care plan;  
and
4. Married to a spouse who does not meet any of the criteria set forth under (1) through (3), these income and resource eligibility rules for an institutionalized spouse may apply to you or your spouse.

If you wish to discuss these eligibility provisions, please contact your local department of social services. Even if you have no intention of pursuing a Medicaid application, you are urged to contact your local department of social services to request an assessment of the total value of your and your spouse's combined countable resources. It is to the advantage of the community spouse to request such an assessment to make certain that allowable resources are not depleted by you for your spouse's cost of care. To request such an assessment, please contact your local department of social services or mail the attached completed "Request for Assessment Form." New York City residents may contact the Human Resources Administration (HRA) Infoline at (718) 557-1399.

## Information about resources:

Effective January 1, 1996, the community spouse is allowed to keep resources in an amount equal to the greater of the following amounts:

1. \$74,820 (the State minimum spousal resource standard); or
2. The amount of the spousal share up to the maximum amount permitted under federal law (\$120,900 for 2017).

For purposes of this calculation, "spousal share" is the amount equal to one-half of the total value of the countable resources of you and your spouse at the beginning of the most recent continuous period of institutionalization of the institutionalized spouse. The most recent continuous period of institutionalization is defined as the most recent period you or your spouse met the criteria listed in items 1 through 4 (under "If you or your spouse are:"). In determining the total value of the countable resources, we will not count the value of your home, household items, personal property, your car, or certain funds established for burial expenses.

The community spouse may be able to obtain additional amounts of resources to generate income when the otherwise available income of the community spouse, together with the income allowance from the institutionalized spouse, is less than the maximum community spouse monthly income allowance, by requesting a fair hearing or commencing a family court proceeding against the institutionalized spouse. Your attorney or local Office for the Aging can provide you with more information.

Either spouse or a representative acting on their behalf may request an assessment of the couple's countable resources, at the beginning, or any time after the beginning of a continuous period of institutionalization. Upon receipt of such request and all relevant documentation, the local district will assess and document the total value of the couple's countable resources and provide each spouse with a copy of the assessment and the documentation upon which it is based. If the request is not filed with a Medicaid application, the local department of social services may charge up to \$25.00 for the cost of preparing and copying the assessment and documentation.

#### **Information about income:**

You may request an assessment/determination of:

1. The community spouse monthly income allowance (an amount of up to \$3,022.50 a month for 2017); and
2. A maximum family member allowance for each minor child, dependent child, dependent parent or dependent sibling of either spouse living with the community spouse of \$677 for 2017 (if the family member has no income of his/her own).

The community spouse may be able to obtain additional amounts of the institutionalized spouse's income, due to exceptional circumstances resulting in significant financial distress, then would otherwise be allowed under the Medicaid program, by requesting a fair hearing or commencing a family court proceeding against the institutionalized spouse. Significant financial distress means exceptional expenses which the community spouse cannot be expected to meet from the monthly maintenance needs allowance or from amounts held in resources. These expenses may include, but are not limited to: recurring or extraordinary non-covered medical expenses (of the community spouse or dependent family members who live with the community spouse); amounts to preserve, maintain, or make major repairs to the home; and amounts necessary to preserve an income-producing asset. Social Services Law 366-c(2)(g) and 366-c(4)(b) require that the amount of such support orders be deducted from the institutionalized spouse's income for eligibility purposes. Such court orders are only effective back to the filing date of the petition. Please contact your attorney or local Office for the Aging for additional information.

If you wish to request an assessment of the total value of your and your spouse's countable resources, a determination of the community spouse resource allowance, community spouse monthly income allowance, or family member allowance(s) and the method of computing such allowances, please contact your local department of social services. New York City residents should call the Human Resources Administration (HRA) Infoline at (718) 557-1399.

#### **Additional Information**

For purposes of determining Medicaid eligibility for the institutionalized spouse, a community spouse must cooperate by providing necessary information about his/her resources. Refusal to provide the necessary information shall be reason for denying Medicaid for the institutionalized spouse because Medicaid eligibility cannot be determined. If denial of Medicaid would result in undue hardship for the institutionalized spouse and an assignment of support is executed or the institutionalized spouse is unable to execute such assignment due to physical or mental impairment, Medicaid shall be authorized. However, if the community spouse refuses to make such resource information available, then the Department, at its option, may refer the matter to court.

#### Undue hardship occurs when:

1. A community spouse fails or refuses to cooperate in providing necessary information about his/her resources;
2. The institutionalized spouse is otherwise eligible for Medicaid;
3. The institutionalized spouse is unable to obtain appropriate medical care without the provision of Medicaid; and
  - a. The community spouse's whereabouts are unknown; or
  - b. The community spouse is incapable of providing the required information due to illness or mental incapacity; or
  - c. The community spouse lived apart from the institutionalized spouse immediately prior to institutionalization; or
  - d. Due to the action or inaction of the community spouse, other than the failure or refusal to cooperate in providing necessary information about his/her resources, the institutionalized spouse will be in need of protection from actual or threatened harm, neglect, or hazardous conditions if discharged from appropriate medical setting.

An institutionalized spouse will not be determined ineligible for Medicaid because the community spouse refuses to make his or her resources in excess of the community spouse resource allowance available to the institutionalized spouse if:

1. The institutionalized spouse executes an assignment of support from the community spouse in favor of the social services district; or
2. The institutionalized spouse is unable to execute such assignment due to physical or mental impairment.

#### **Contribution from Community Spouse**

The amount of money that we will request as a contribution from the community spouse will be based on his/her income and the number of certain individuals in the community depending on that income. We will request a contribution from a community spouse of 25% of the amount his/her otherwise available income that exceeds the minimum monthly maintenance needs allowance plus any family member allowance(s). If the community spouse feels that he/she cannot contribute the amount requested, he/she has the right to schedule a conference with the local department of social services to try to reach an agreement about the amount he/she is able to pay.

Pursuant to Section 366(3)(a) of the Social Services Law, Medicaid MUST be provided to the institutionalized spouse, if the community spouse fails or refuses to contribute his/her income towards the institutionalized spouse's cost of care. However, if the community spouse fails or refuses to make his/her income available as requested, then the Department, at its option, may refer the matter to court for a review of the spouse's actual ability to pay.