

Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) and Stimulus Checks: What You Need to Know

In North Carolina, Medicaid home and community based services (HCBS) assist a person in living at home.* Under recent COVID-19 legislation, most people receiving Medicaid HCBS are receiving stimulus payments of up to \$1,200. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) will issue these payments in the same way that you receive your Social Security benefit (direct deposit or a paper check by mail).

This money belongs to you and will NOT affect your Medicaid eligibility!

Does This Stimulus Payment Count as Income for Medicaid?

No. Under federal rules, a stimulus payment (also called an “economic impact” payment) is not counted as income. Therefore, receiving a stimulus payment will not affect your eligibility for Medicaid services. If you currently have to “spend down” some of your income in order to qualify for Medicaid, your monthly spend-down amount will remain the same.

In addition, the stimulus payment does not count as a Medicaid resource for 12 months. This means that for the first year after you get the payment, it cannot cause you to have “too much” savings.

EXAMPLE

Mary receives \$1,100 per month in Social Security benefits deposited to her checking account. On April 30th, the IRS deposited her \$1,200 stimulus payment into her account.

Mary qualifies for home-based Medicaid services through an HCBS waiver in her state, and has a \$35 per month spend-down. After receiving the stimulus payment, her monthly spend-down amount remains \$35.

Mary also has \$1,000 in savings in a bank account. After receiving the stimulus payment, her savings will increase to \$2,200. Her state has a \$2,000 resource limit for Medicaid. To retain Medicaid eligibility, she must spend down her savings to under \$2,000 within a year—before May 2021.

When Will the Check Arrive?

The IRS began making stimulus payments on April 15, 2020. For people receiving Social Security, most checks are sent the same way Social Security benefits are sent. All recipients of Social Security benefits; including retirement, survivors, disability (SSDI), and supplemental security income (SSI); Veterans Administration benefits; or Railroad Retirement benefits will receive payment automatically, without any action on their part. If someone is currently receiving benefits through direct deposit, the stimulus payment will arrive through direct deposit as well. The IRS has created [a guide specifically for Social Security and SSI recipients](#) with questions about their stimulus payments.

Are There Restrictions on How I Can Spend the Stimulus Money?

In general, you can spend the stimulus money as you wish. This is also true for people who live in a residential setting such as an assisted living facility; the money belongs to you, not the facility.

Do I Need to File a Tax Return to Receive a Check?

Most people will not need to do anything to get their stimulus payment. Action is only required if you do NOT receive Social Security (including retirement, survivors, disability, and SSI), Veterans Administration, or Railroad Retirement benefits AND did not file a tax return in both 2018 and 2019.

What if I Don't Receive Federal Benefits and Didn't File a Tax Return in Both 2018 and 2019?

To receive your stimulus payment, you should [file online as soon as possible with the Internal Revenue Service](#) (blue button, mid-page).

Where Can I Find More Information About the Stimulus Check?

- IRS: [Economic Impact Payments: What You Need to Know](#)

Who Else Can I Contact?

People who receive Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services, their family, or caregivers can contact the [Elder Care Locator](#), 1-800-677-1116 for more information. They can ask for a referral to legal aid offices or to their state's Protection and Advocacy System (often known as Disability Rights), or Center for Independent Living.

People who live in a residential setting, such as an assisted living facility, personal care home or similar can contact the [Long-Term Care Ombudsman](#) if they have questions or issues, or the Elder Care Locator for information or a referral to help get a problem resolved.

Please contact ConsultNCLER@acl.hhs.gov for free case consultation assistance, available for professionals assisting older adults. Sign up for our email list and access more resources at NCLER.acl.gov.

* This resource was adapted for North Carolina residents by Disability Rights North Carolina with permission from NCLER.