

## WHAT IS MEDICAID?



Medicaid offers different types of programs, but let's focus on Long-Term Care Medicaid: This is a needs-based program for people 65 or older, blind or disabled of any age, who have been in a hospital or nursing facility for 30 days or longer. To qualify for Medicaid, certain income and asset requirements must be met.

## CAN I APPLY FOR MEDICAID BY MYSELF?



Filing for Medicaid is not as simple as completing a couple of application forms: that is just the start of a time-consuming process that often takes several months. The best and least stressful option is to contact an Elder Law Attorney to help you succeed in your application. Hiring an attorney may sound expensive, but it's typically less expensive than one month of nursing home care, and it can save more assets in the long run.

## CAN THE NURSING HOME HELP ME APPLY FOR MEDICAID?



Yes, but they will likely be unable to provide or implement the best strategies for you and your family. While they may be familiar with the application itself, nursing home employees cannot give legal advice and do not have a fiduciary duty to do what's in your best interests.

## MEDICARE VS MEDICAID

- Health insurance program. You must have contributed to the Medicare system to be eligible and generally must be 65 or older, blind, or disabled
- Pays for no more than 100 days of nursing home care
- Pays for primary hospital care and related medically-necessary services such as ambulance, physical therapy, skilled nursing care, meals, medications
- Needs-based health care program. You must meet income and asset limits to be eligible, and must be 65 or older, blind, or disabled
- Controlled state to state, which creates different regulations in each state of application
- Pays for long-term care, medical supplies, special dietary supplements, non-emergency medical transportation, meals, medications

To recap: **Medicare** is an insurance program that you qualify for automatically when you reach a certain age. **Medicaid** is a needs-based program; its intent is to help pay for care for those that cannot afford it.

## SHOULD I FILE MY APPLICATION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE?



There are specific rules regarding the requirements of income and assets, and it is very easy to apply at the "wrong time." If a Medicaid application is submitted too early, the applicant may wait months for the application to be processed, only to find out they were not eligible at the time the application was submitted. Working with an experienced Elder Law Attorney can be critical to the success of a Medicaid application.

## 3 MYTHS ABOUT MEDICAID



### MYTH #1

*"If I apply, Medicaid will take my home."*

An applicant's home is exempt for eligibility purposes. Medicaid will seek to recover certain expenses, and a claim may be filed against the estate. However, the earlier you begin planning, the more options you will have to protect your assets.



### MYTH #2

*"I make too much money to qualify for Medicaid."*

False. You don't have to be broke to receive Medicaid. As a reference, your income must be less than the monthly cost of care in a nursing home at the Medicaid rate.



### MYTH #3

*"I should spend all of my money before applying."*

False. Medicaid planning is a strategy of planned transfers, gifts, use of financial products, and other strategies to preserve and protect some assets. The sooner you start planning, the more assets you will be able to protect to qualify for financial assistance from Medicaid.

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