

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MEDICARE AND MEDICAID?

Medicare and Medicaid sound alike, and many people use them interchangeably. However, they are very different programs. Medicare is a federal program that provides health coverage to insured workers who are age 65 or older or who have a disability. Medicaid is a state and federal program that provides health coverage to persons with low income and, for some Medicaid programs, limited assets. Also, unlike Medicare, which is totally federal, Medicaid is a joint state-federal program. Each state operates its own Medicaid system, but this system must conform to federal guidelines in order for the state to receive federal money, which pays for about half the state's Medicaid costs.

Medicare and Medicaid Coverage of Long-Term Care

One of the major differences between Medicare and Medicaid is in the context of coverage of long-term care services. Medicaid covers nursing home care for qualified persons. Medicare, however, for the most part, does not cover nursing home care. Medicare Part A covers only up to 100 days of skilled care in a "skilled nursing" facility per spell of illness. The care in the skilled nursing facility must follow a stay of at least three days in a hospital. And for days 21 through 100, you must pay a copayment of \$164.50 a day (in 2017). (This may be covered by Medicare supplemental insurance.)

Because of the lack of Medicare coverage and the high cost of nursing home care, Medicaid has become the default nursing home insurance program. Most people pay out of their savings for long-term care until they become eligible for Medicaid.

Medicare does not cover assisted living or custodial home care (assistance with feeding, dressing, toileting, bathing and moving around). It will provide limited skilled services in the home.

In Illinois, Medicaid does pay for some home care (usually not more than 20 hours a week) through the Illinois Community Care program administered by the Department on Aging.

It also covers assisted living through its Supportive Living certified facilities. <https://www.illinois.gov/hfs/MedicalPrograms/slf/Pages/default.aspx>. Medicaid will not cover live-in caregivers.

When you have questions related to elder law, estate planning, probate, and guardianship, think of the attorneys at Dutton Casey & Mesoloras. With over 130 years of combined legal experience, you can depend on our team for the knowledge, advice, and support you deserve to resolve your legal needs.

Resources:

Community Care Program – www.illinois.gov/aging/CommunityServices/Pages/ccp.aspx

Supportive Living Facilities – www.illinois.gov/hfs/MedicalPrograms/slf/Pages/default.aspx

Medicare – www.medicare.gov

National Elder Law Foundation – www.nelf.org

National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys – www.naela.org

(rev. april 2019)

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Appointments are also available in Arlington Heights, Lisle, Skokie, and Westchester, Illinois, or via video conferencing or telephone.

