

Using the MSP to enroll in Part B

Medicare Savings Programs (MSPs) help pay your Medicare costs if you have limited income and savings. Additional benefits of enrolling in an MSP include:

- Allowing you to enroll in Medicare Part B outside of the usual enrollment periods
- Eliminating your Part B late enrollment penalty, if you have one

There are three main MSPs, each with their own eligibility criteria:

1. Qualifying Individual (QI)
2. Specified Low-income Medicare Beneficiary (SLMB)
3. Qualified Medicare Beneficiary (QMB)

To use the MSP to enroll in Part B, you must currently have Part A, unless you qualify for QMB. If you do not have Part A, you should enroll before applying for an MSP.

MSPs also have income and asset limits, which vary by state. Be sure to call your local Medicaid office or State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) for more information about MSPs in your state and for help applying. After enrolling in any of the three programs above, you should also receive Part B. Your Part B effective date is the same day as your MSP effective date.

You should be sent an MSP decision notice from your local Medicaid office within 45 days of filing an application. If you are approved, it may take three to four months before your benefits take effect. Once your benefit is processed, you should receive the MSP and Part B retroactive to the effective date on your decision notice.

Case example

In mid-May, Mr. A went to his Medicaid office and applied for an MSP. He received an approval letter for SLMB at the start of July (approximately 45 days later), stating that his benefit would be retroactive to February (Note: SLMB is three months retroactive from the date of application). He finally received his SLMB enrollment documentation in October, and shortly after this, he received his Medicare card with a Part B effective date of February.

It does not matter that Mr. A's SLMB benefit was not fully processed until October: the original correspondence he received states that the benefit is retroactive to February, and so is his Part B coverage. Medicare should pay for Part B-covered services received any time after the Part B effective date. Mr. A's providers can collect these payments by submitting claims to Medicare for past services.