

Your Guide to Public Benefits in Texas

Find, understand, and apply for programs in your state that can help:

- Increase your income,
- Save money on prescription drugs
- Pay doctors' bills;
- Buy groceries; and
- Cover other basic costs.

This fact sheet describes the programs in your state, helps you decide which are right for you, and tells you how to sign up. Income guidelines, eligibility requirements, and telephone numbers are subject to change. For the most up-to-date information in your ZIP code area log on to www.aarp.org/quicklink.

You can also go to the Benefits QuickLINK website (www.aarp.org/quicklink) to find out if you qualify for the benefits listed below or to print out applications for programs in your state.

Paying for Health Care and Prescription Drugs

Medicare

Benefit: Health insurance that helps pay for preventive care, doctor visits, hospital stays and prescription drugs.

Who can apply: People who are 65 and older, and younger people with disabilities or kidney failure.

How to apply: Call the Social Security Administration toll-free at **1-800-772-1213** and tell the operator where you live. You



can also log on to www.socialsecurity.gov and select “Questions about Medicare.” For information about the Medicare prescription drug coverage, call **1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227)** or log on to www.medicare.gov.

For one-on-one assistance, call the Health Information Counseling and Advocacy Program (HICAP), also known as the Texas State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP), toll-free at **1-800-252-9240** or log on to www.tdi.state.tx.us/consumer/hicap/hicaphme.html.

Medicare Savings Programs

Benefit: Pays for some of the costs of Medicare, including the Part B premium, deductibles, and co-payments. How much you get depends on your income and assets.

Who can apply: People who get Medicare and earn around \$1,219 per month for one person, or \$1,640 per month for a married couple.

How to apply: Get an application from your regional Texas Health and Human Services (THHS) Commission Office. Call **1-800-252-8263** and ask for the hotline in your region, or log on to www.dads.state.tx.us. THHS staff will give you an application to complete and return, and then contact you for an in-person or telephone interview.

Medicare Rx Extra Help

Benefit: Pays for the monthly fee and deductible for Medicare prescription drug coverage, and lowers prescription drug co-payments.

Who can apply: People who get Medicare and have combined savings, investments and real estate (other than your home) are not worth more than \$12,510 if you are single, or \$25,010 if you are married and living with your spouse and have a limited income.

How to apply: Call the Social Security Administration toll-free at **1-800-772-1213** and ask for the Medicare Rx Extra Help application. You can also log on to www.socialsecurity.gov and click on the Medicare section.

For one-on-one assistance, call the Health Information Counseling and Advocacy Program (HICAP), also known as the Texas State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP), toll-free at **1-800-252-9240** or log on to www.tdi.state.tx.us/consumer/hicap/hicaphme.html.

Medicaid

Benefit: Provides medical coverage for hospital care, health center and clinical

services, doctor care, nurse care, lab and X-ray services and nursing homes.

Who can apply: People who are 65 or older, blind or have disabilities, few resources, or in some cases, high medical bills. To qualify, you must meet Medicaid income and asset limits. Income limits vary, depending on the size of your family and where you live. Income limits also vary based on the particular Medicaid program for which you qualify, so contact your state Medicaid office for more information.

How to apply: For more information or to apply, visit your local Medicaid office. To find the office nearest to you log on to www.hhsc.state.tx.us/medicaid. If you have questions, you can call the toll-free Medicaid Hotline at **1-800-252-8263**.

Help with Your Home

State Property Tax Assistance

Benefit: Older Texans may be eligible for an additional \$10,000 homestead exemption on their home's value for school taxes (in addition to the regular \$15,000 homestead exemption) and a \$3,000 exemption from other local taxes.

Who can apply: Any Texas homeowner who owns and lives in their home on January 1 can qualify for the Texas General Homestead Exemption (1113A/B) of \$15,000 on their home's value for school taxes for that year. An additional \$10,000 is available for Texans who also (1) are age 65 or older, (2) receive disability benefits or meet the definition of disabled in the federal Old Age, Survivor's and Disability Act, or (3) are age 55 or older and the surviving spouse of a person who received the age 65 or older exemption.

How to apply: For more information and an application, call the Texas



Comptroller's Office Property Tax Division at **1-800-252-9121** or log on to www.window.state.tx.us. The application deadline is April 30 but late applications can be accepted. Once your application is approved, you will automatically receive the 65 or older exemption each year

Comprehensive Energy Assistance Program (CEAP)

Benefit: Pays heating and cooling bills.

Who can apply: Texans with annual incomes less than \$13,000 for one person or \$17,500 for two people.

How to apply: Contact the CEAP service provider near you to get an application. Call the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA) toll-free at **1-877-399-8939**. For more information log on to www.tdhca.state.tx.us/ea.

Weatherization Assistance Program for Low Income Persons (WAP)

Benefit: A review of your home's energy efficiency, which identifies air leaks, inefficient appliances, and energy-related home repairs that can save hundreds of

dollars and increase the value of your property.

Who can apply: Texans with annual incomes less than \$13,000 for one person or \$17,500 for two people who live in a structure that will benefit from being weatherized.

How to apply: Contact the WAP service provider in your area to get an application. You can download the list of providers at www.tdhca.state.tx.us/ea/wap/htm or call toll-free at **1-888-606-8889**.

Telephone Assistance

Benefit: Helps pay for the cost of basic local telephone services.

Who can apply: Qualified low-income older adults. You are automatically eligible if you are in one of the following programs: Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Federal Housing Assistance/Section 8 Programs, Food Stamps, Low Income Home Energy Assistance Programs, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) General Assistance, and Tribally Administered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

How to apply: Call your local phone company and tell the sales department that you want to apply for Link Up or Lifeline.

Help Buying Nutritious Food

SNAP Food Benefits

Benefit: An Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card, similar to a debit card, also called the Lone Star Card, that you can use like cash to pay for food at most grocery stores.

Who can apply: People with limited income and resources, especially people 60 and over.

How to apply: Contact the Texas Health and Human Services Commission toll-

free at **1-888-834-7406** or log on to www.hhsc.state.tx.us/Help/Food/FoodStamps/index.html.

Cash Assistance

Social Security

Benefit: Monthly checks. How much you get depends on how long you have worked, how much money you earned, where you worked, and your age when you began getting benefits.

Who can apply: Workers who are 62 or older, people with disabilities, or the spouse and children of a deceased or disabled worker who paid into the Social Security program.

How to apply: You can find out if you qualify for Social Security Benefits by using the screening tool on the Social Security website (www.socialsecurity.gov). If you qualify, you can apply for retirement benefits online at www.socialsecurity.gov. You can also make an appointment at your local Social Security Office. To find your local Social Security Office, call **1-800-772-1213** toll free and tell the operator where you live.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

Benefit: Monthly checks.

Who can apply: People who are 65 and older, or people who are blind or have disabilities and have very low income and assets.

How to apply: You must make an appointment at your local Social Security office to apply. You can find your local Social Security office by calling **1-800-772-1213** toll free and telling the operator where you live. Or, you can log on to www.ssa.gov/pgm/links_ssi.htm.

Other Information

Eldercare Locator

Connects older Americans and their caregivers with sources of information on senior services. Call **1-800-677-1116** (hours of operation are Mon. - Fri. 9:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m. ET) or log on to www.eldercare.gov.

Senior Information Hotline

For additional information about other programs and resources for older adults, call the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services toll-free at **1-800-252-9240** or log on to www.dads.state.tx.us/services/index.cfm.

Legal Help

If you need a lawyer but have limited resources, you can call the Legal Hotline for Older Texans at **1-800-622-2520** or log on to www.tlsc.org/hotline.html.

You can also go to the Benefits QuickLINK website at www.aarp.org/quicklink.



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The AARP Foundation is AARP's affiliated charity. Foundation programs provide security, protection and empowerment for older persons in need. Low-income older workers receive the job training and placement they need to re-join the workforce. Free tax preparation is provided for low-and moderate-income individuals, with special attention to those 60 and older. The Foundation's litigation staff protects the legal rights of older Americans in critical health, long-term care, consumer and employment situations. Additional programs provide information, education and services to ensure that people over 50 lead lives of independence, dignity and purpose. Foundation programs are funded by grants, tax-deductible contributions and AARP.