

# Your Guide to Public Benefits in Wisconsin

**F**ind, 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](http://www.aarp.org/quicklink).

You can also go to the Benefits QuickLINK website ([www.aarp.org/quicklink](http://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](http://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](http://www.medicare.gov).

For one-on-one assistance, contact an elderly benefits specialist in your county. Call, the MediGap Helpline, also known as the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP), toll-free at **1-800-242-1060** or log on to [www.dhfs.state.wi.us/aging/SHIP.htm](http://www.dhfs.state.wi.us/aging/SHIP.htm).

### 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:** You can apply for the Medicare Savings Program by mail, telephone, or in person. To obtain an application or to apply in person, contact your local county/tribal Social or Human Services agency (certifying agency), W-2 agency or Medicaid outstation site, also referred to as Medicare Premium Assistance in Wisconsin. For more information or for help with your application, call Member Services toll-free at **1-800-362-3002** or log on to [www.badgercareplus.org](http://www.badgercareplus.org).

### 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](http://www.socialsecurity.gov) and click on the Medicare section.

For additional assistance, call the MediGap Helpline, also known as the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP), toll-free at **1-800-242-1060** or log on to [www.dhfs.state.wi.us/aging/SHIP.htm](http://www.dhfs.state.wi.us/aging/SHIP.htm).

### Wisconsin SeniorCare Program

**Benefit:** This program provides prescription drug assistance. The out-of-pocket expenses and type of benefits will depend upon the income of each applicant and are broken down into three levels.

**Who can apply:** Must be age 65 or older and not receiving Medicaid.

**How to apply:** For more information or an application, call the Wisconsin SeniorCare Program toll-free at **1-800-657-2038** or log on to [www.dhfs.state.wi.us/seniorcare/index.htm](http://www.dhfs.state.wi.us/seniorcare/index.htm).

### 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:** You can apply for Medicaid by mail, telephone, or in person. To obtain an application or to apply in person, contact your local county/tribal Social or Human Services agency (certifying agency), W-2 agency or Medicaid outstation site, also referred to as Medicare Premium Assistance in Wisconsin. For more information or for help with your application, call Member Services toll-free at **1-800-362-3002** or log on to [www.badgercareplus.org](http://www.badgercareplus.org).



## Help with Your Home State Property Tax Assistance

**Benefit:** Homeowners and renters whose household income is less than \$24,500 can benefit from the Homestead Credit program. In addition, the Property Tax Deferral Loan Program provides loans to qualifying older homeowners to help pay for property taxes. Principal and interest are repaid when you transfer ownership of your home or move from your home.

**Who can apply:** The amount of the benefit varies depending on total household income and property tax liability. Renters count part of their rent as property taxes.

**How to apply:** For further information about the Homestead Tax Credit Program, call the Wisconsin Department of Revenue Homestead Credit Unit at **608-266-8641** or log on to [www.revenue.wi.gov/faqs/ise/home.html](http://www.revenue.wi.gov/faqs/ise/home.html). For further information about the Property Tax Deferral Loan Program, call toll-free at **1-800-755-7835** (statewide).

## Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program (WHEAP)

**Benefit:** Pays heating and cooling bills, and some energy-related home repairs.

**Who can apply:** Low-income people with annual incomes less than \$15,600 for one person, or \$21,000 for two people.

**How to apply:** For application assistance, call toll-free at **1-866-432-8947** or log on to [www.heat.state.wi.us](http://www.heat.state.wi.us).

## 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

### FoodShare

**Benefit:** An Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card, similar to a debit 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 Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services

toll-free at **1-800-362-3002** or log on to <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/foodshare>.

## 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](http://www.socialsecurity.gov)). If you qualify, you can apply for retirement benefits online at [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://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](http://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](http://www.eldercare.gov).

### Senior Information Hotline

For additional information about other programs and resources for older adults in Wisconsin, call **608-266-2000** or log on to <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/LTCare/Generalinfo/RCs.htm>.

### Legal Help

If you need a lawyer but have limited resources, you can call the Wisconsin Judicare toll-free at **1-800-472-1638** or log on to [www.judicare.org](http://www.judicare.org).

**You can also go to the Benefits QuickLINK website at [www.aarp.org/quicklink](http://www.aarp.org/quicklink).**



#### Benefits Outreach Program

601 E Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20049  
1-888-OUR-AARP (1-888-687-2277)  
Email: [benefitsoutreach@aarp.org](mailto:benefitsoutreach@aarp.org)

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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.