



Connecting Older Adults with Community-based Resources and Options

The Area Agency on Aging of Suburban Cook County, since 1974

Important Changes to Illinois Cares Rx

Funding for Illinois Cares Rx, the state's program to help seniors and people with disabilities pay for prescription drugs, was cut in half in the budget just signed by the Governor. The good news is that the program will continue to provide vital assistance to more than 160,000 low income people. However, beginning September 1, about 35,000 now on the program will lose their benefits. Those remaining in the program will see an increase in the amount they pay for each prescription they fill (called the co-pay).

Based on the budget cuts, there will be significant changes to the Illinois Cares Rx program that take effect on **September 1, 2011**. The new law includes:

- Lowering the income eligibility limit to 200% of the federal poverty level (FPL), which is \$21,780 for an individual and \$29,420 for a couple
- Eliminating the 'rebate' program for those receiving a \$25 monthly check instead of Illinois Cares Rx benefits
- Authorizing the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS) to make changes to the co-pays for the program. These amounts will be increased, but the final amounts haven't been announced yet.

How will you find out about the changes?

Everyone currently in the program should receive a letter from HFS explaining the changes. People who have incomes above the new limits will get a detailed letter notifying them that they will lose their Illinois Cares Rx benefits beginning September 1 and providing information about where to get assistance. When the new co-payment amounts are final, people remaining in the program will also get a letter explaining the changes.

How can you prepare now?

1. Watch for a letter from the Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS), explaining the changes and providing phone numbers and websites for assistance. Call with any questions or for help looking into other options.
2. Check your income – if it is below the amounts in the chart below, you may be able to get back into the program.

3. If you are no longer eligible for benefits through Illinois Cares Rx because your income is over the new limits or you are losing your monthly rebate check, you might qualify for one of many assistance programs offered by drug manufacturers or charities.
4. To help lower your costs, check with your doctor to see if a generic or other less expensive drug will work for you.
5. Check out the discount programs at your local chain pharmacy.

What about the Circuit Breaker and Ride Free Programs?

Many people in Illinois Cares Rx also participate in the **Circuit Breaker** (property tax grant and license plate discount) or **Ride Free** programs (public transportation for seniors and people with disabilities). These programs are not changing; however, beginning September 1, the incomes limits for all three programs will no longer be identical. Even if you lose Illinois Cares Rx benefits, you may remain in Circuit Breaker and/or Ride Free programs. To qualify **to join or stay in the programs, your annual income must be at or below these amounts:**

Household size (persons)	Illinois Cares Rx limit effective 9-1-2011	Circuit Breaker and Rides Free limit 9-1-2011
1	\$21,780	\$27,610
2	\$29,420	\$36,635
3	\$37,060	\$45,657

Note: to qualify for the Seniors Ride Free program you must submit the IL-1363 application and be approved during 2011 (you cannot use the older cards after September 1, 2011.)

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