

## Chapter Seven

### “Medicare Savings Programs” (QMB, SLMB, QI), and QDWI

**Scope of chapter.** This chapter deals with four programs. Three of them are sometimes referred to as the “Medicare Savings Programs.” These three are the Qualified Medicare Beneficiary Medicaid Program (QMB), the Specified Low-Income Medicare Beneficiary Medicaid Program (SLMB), and the Qualified Individual Program (QI). A fourth program that uses the same income exclusions and deductions is the Qualified Disabled Working Individual Program (QDWI). In addition to providing help with certain Medicare costs, the first three of these programs (QMB, SLMB, QI) have this feature: Eligibility for them means the Medicare beneficiary has eligibility for the low-income subsidy – the “extra help” – in regard to Medicare Part D (the Medicare prescription drug program).

**Chapter questions and answers.** After some of the paragraphs there are questions relating to the materials covered in the paragraphs. An answer key is at the end of the chapter.

#### **Overview of paragraphs.**

- Paragraph 1 discusses the sources of law for the Medicare Savings Programs.
- Paragraph 2 provides a brief overview of the Medicare Savings Programs.
- Paragraph 3 discusses the role of the Social Security Administration’s Program Operations Manual System (POMS) in determining what resources and income count for eligibility in the Medicare Savings Programs.
- Paragraphs 4 and 5 discuss certain points regarding the Medicare Savings Programs.
- Paragraph 6 includes a discussion of what resources do and do not count, using the Qualified Medicare Program as the context to describe the treatment of resources.
- Paragraphs 7 through 9 discuss the other two Medicare Savings Programs, and also the QDWI program, including the varying income limits for these programs.
- Paragraphs 10 through 15 discuss how countable income is determined, and what the income limits are for the different Medicare Savings Programs.
- Paragraphs 16 through 21 discuss the benefits under the Medicare Savings

**Programs, and QDWI.**

- Paragraphs 22 and 23 discuss the application and appeals process.
- Paragraphs 24 through 29 address the relationship between the Medicare Savings Programs and Medicare Supplement Insurance (“Medigap”), including:
  - The right of Medicaid recipients to a 24 month suspension of a Medigap policy, and
  - The requirement that Medigap policies not duplicate Medicaid benefits.
- Paragraphs 30 and 31 provide information about some additional sources of assistance in serving clients. As with other programs administered by the State of Texas, [www.yourtexasbenefits.com](http://www.yourtexasbenefits.com) is a Web site to explore eligibility and through which an application can be submitted.

**Back-up and support.** Any Benefits Counselor who has questions about the information in this chapter can call the Legal Hotline for Texans at the Benefits Counselor support number for further information. In certain paragraphs, Web sites are identified. Once the reader has located the level of a Web site page or link that the reader will be using time and again, the reader can, of course, bookmark that Web location.

**1. Sources of law.**

- a. The Medicaid law is Title XIX of the Social Security Act. It is sometimes called “Title Nineteen,” and when it is referred to in that manner, the reference is to Title XIX of the Social Security Act. The Medicaid law is *codified* at 42 United States Code Section 1396.
- b. When a Public Law is said to be “codified” that means it has been assigned a place in the United States Code. The United States Code may be abbreviated as “U.S.C.” The Medicaid law – codified at 42 U.S.C. §1396 – has *extensive* sub-paragraphs. For that reason, the particular part(s) of the federal Medicaid law that may bear on an individual’s case may have several lower and upper case letters, and several numbers. The definitions of individuals covered by the programs discussed in this chapter are located at these sections of the U.S. Code:

- QMB: 42 U.S.C. §1396d(p)(1).
- SLMB: 42 U.S.C. §1396a(a)(10)(E)(iii).

- **QI:** 42 U.S.C. §1396a(a)(10)(E)(iv)(II).
- **QDWI:** 42 U.S.C. §1396d(s).

The federal Medicaid law requires that states operate their Medicaid programs under a State Medicaid Plan, which is a very extensive document.

- c. **Benefits Counselors who want assistance in obtaining the part(s) of the State Medicaid Plan or the parts of the federal Medicaid law that bear on a case, can call the Benefits Counselor support number at the Legal Hotline for Texans.**
- d. **The Texas state statute which authorizes the Medicaid program is Chapter 32 of the Texas Human Resources Code. The state Medicaid administrative rules for the programs discussed in this chapter are found at 1 Texas Administrative Code §§358.200 – 358.220. The Texas Administrative Code can be accessed directly through the Web site of the Texas Secretary of State, at [http://info.sos.state.tx.us/pls/pub/readtac\\$ext.viewtac](http://info.sos.state.tx.us/pls/pub/readtac$ext.viewtac).**
- e. **The federal Medicaid law requires states to provide Medicaid for low-income families, for persons receiving SSI, and for persons qualifying for Title XIX long-term care (“Nursing Facility Medicaid”). The law also requires states to provide a limited type of Medicaid for certain low-income persons who are enrolled in Medicare. These persons are called “dual eligibles.” The programs they qualify for are now called “Medicare Savings Programs.” States are not required to participate in Medicaid, but if they do, they are required to follow the federal Medicaid law (42 U.S.C. §1396). All states participate in the Medicaid program.**
- f. **The Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008, which is Public Law 110-275, was enacted by the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress in July of 2008. It is sometimes abbreviated “MIPPA.” MIPPA included certain provisions regarding the Medicare Savings Programs. Most of these provisions are set to take effect in 2010. One provision though, that had immediate effect, was the extension of the Qualifying Individual Program (“QI”). QI is the only one of the four programs discussed in this chapter that is not an entitlement, and so from time to time, Congress extends the QI program. Section 111(a) of MIPPA amended 42 U.S.C. §1396a(a)(10)(E)(iv), extending the QI program to December of 2009.**
- g. **Questions regarding sources of law (circle the correct answer):**
  - i. **The Medicaid law is Title XIX of which Act?**

1. **The National Recovery Act**
2. **The False Claims Act**
3. **The Social Security Act**
4. **The Data Quality Act**
- ii. **The federal Medicaid law requires that states operate their Medicaid program under**
  1. **A State Medicaid Plan**
  2. **An Interstate Compact**
  3. **A State Sunset Law**
  4. **An Interstate Non-Compete Agreement**
- iii. **The Texas Administrative Code Sections pertaining to the Medicaid program can be accessed directly through the Web site of the**
  1. **Texas Department of Agriculture**
  2. **Canadian River Municipal Water Authority**
  3. **Texas Drought Preparedness Council**
  4. **Texas Secretary of State**
- iv. **The law that was enacted by the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress that extended the QI program is sometimes called**
  1. **HIPAA**
  2. **LIPPA**
  3. **MIPPA**
  4. **SIPPA**

**2. Medicare Savings Programs.**

- a. **There are three Medicare Savings Programs: Qualified Medicare Beneficiary Medicaid (QMB); Specified Low-Income Medicare Beneficiary Medicaid (SLMB); Qualifying Individual (QI). The Qualified Disabled Working Individuals (QDWI) is not a “Medicare Savings Program,” although it does use the same income exclusions and deductions as the Medicare Savings Programs. All four of the programs only assist persons who enroll or have already enrolled in Medicare. If a person is eligible to enroll in Medicare but has not done so because of the cost-sharing expense (such as the premium expense), the person can enroll as part of the steps in achieving eligibility for one of the Medicare Savings Programs. This may require coordination between the state Medicaid program and the Social Security Administration. Persons who achieve eligibility for a Medicare**

Savings Program or for the Qualified Disabled Working Individuals Program are sometimes referred to by the abbreviation for their particular Medicare Savings Program. The Medicaid benefits that QMBs, SLMBs, QIs, and QDWIs receive are limited. The benefits are payment of some or all of the Medicare cost-sharing amounts (premiums, co-insurance, and deductibles). In Texas, all of the Medicare Savings Programs and QDWI are exempt from what is called “Medicaid Estate Recovery.” Persons who are eligible for QMB, SLMB, or QI are also considered to have met the eligibility requirements for the “extra help” (the low-income subsidy) under Medicare Part D. Persons who qualify for QDWI and whose income is less than 150% of the federal poverty income limit can qualify on the basis of their income for extra help.

- b. Questions regarding the Medicare Savings Programs (circle the correct answer):
  - i. To receive the help of the Medicare Savings Programs, a person needs to enroll or be enrolled in Medicare.
    1. True
    2. False
  - ii. In Texas, all of the Medicare Savings Programs are exempt from Medicaid Estate Recovery.
    1. True
    2. False
  - iii. Persons who are eligible for QMB, SLMB, or QI are eligible for “extra help” under Medicare Part D.
    1. True
    2. False
  
3. The role of the Social Security Program Operations Manual System (“POMS”). The provisions of the Social Security Program Operations Manual System (“POMS”) that relate to SSI’s treatment of income and resources can be useful in resolving intricate questions concerning how income and/or resources are treated under the Medicare Savings Programs in Texas. The POMS can be accessed at the Web site of the Social Security Administration – [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov). The direct link to the POMS is <https://secure.ssa.gov/apps10/poms.nsf/partlist!OpenView>. (“SI” – the Supplemental Security Income area of the POMS – is the area that is most used in connection with Medicaid program.) SI 011 is the area of the POMS that deals

with what counts as a resource under SSI (and hence, under the Medicare Savings Programs and under other Medicaid programs). In addition to being useful for the Medicare Savings Programs and other Medicaid programs, the POMS' primary purpose is to provide detailed treatment of the SSI programs and of the Social Security benefit programs. Benefits Counselors who want assistance in accessing the POMS can call the Benefits Counselor support number at the Legal Hotline for Texans.

4. **Relationship between Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and regular Medicaid in Texas.** It is important to keep in mind that in Texas, every person who receives *any* amount of SSI – so little as one dollar – also receives regular Medicaid. A recipient of regular Medicaid who is a Medicare beneficiary receives the benefits of the Qualified Medicare Beneficiary Medicaid (QMB) program as part of the regular Medicaid program. Thus, knowledge of the POMS can help the advocate to represent persons seeking SSI. Qualifying for SSI means eligibility for regular Medicaid, in Texas. For a Medicare beneficiary, the benefits of regular Medicaid include the benefits of QMB.
5. **Two further points about the Medicare Savings Programs and the SSI program in regard to resources.** Unlike the SSI program, there is no penalty for giving away property to qualify for any of the Medicare Savings Programs. Also, under the Medicare Savings Programs, if only one spouse of a couple has Medicare, the couple general resource exclusion (\$6000) nonetheless is used, not the individual general resource exclusion (\$4000).
6. **Qualified Medicare Beneficiaries (QMBs).**
  - a. A QMB is an aged or disabled Medicare beneficiary who has: (1) income at or below the Federal poverty line; and (2) resources not more than 200 percent of the resources limit set for the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Program (once resources are excluded that do not count, the 2009 QMB resource limits are \$4,000 for an individual and \$6,000 for a couple). The Texas Medicaid Program, in the State Medicaid Plan at Attachment 2.6-A, opted to use the resource exclusions that apply under SSI, in excluding resources under QMB. Inasmuch as all the Medicare Savings Programs use the same resource exclusions, a review of the resource exclusions under QMB is pertinent. These resource exclusions also apply to SLMB, QI, and

**QDWI. There is a list of excluded resources at POMS SI 01110.210. The most frequently encountered excluded resources will be the homestead, a vehicle used for transportation regardless of year, make, model, or value, household goods and personal effects, life insurance up to \$1,500 in face value, separately identifiable burial funds up to \$1,500 (less any amount of life insurance excluded) and burial spaces. Under the POMS, these resources are excluded:**

- i. The home serving as the principal place of residence, including the land on which the home stands and other buildings on that land. Thus, the homestead is excluded, regardless of value, number of rooms, size of dwelling, and regardless of acres (as long as the land is all contiguous with the land that the dwelling sits on);**
- ii. Funds from the sale of a home, if reinvested timely in a replacement home (within three full calendar months of receipt of the funds (POMS SI 01130.110));**
- iii. Jointly-owned real property which cannot be sold without undue hardship (due to loss of housing) to the other owner(s);**
- iv. Real property for so long as the owner's reasonable efforts to sell it are unsuccessful;**
- v. Restricted, allotted Indian land if the Indian/owner cannot dispose of the land without permission of other individuals, his/her tribe, or an agency of the Federal Government;**
- vi. One vehicle used for transportation;**
- vii. Life insurance if the face value is \$1500 or less (burial insurance policies and term insurance policies that do not generate a cash surrender value are excluded (POMS SI 01130.300 B. 3.));**
- viii. Burial space or plot held for an eligible individual, his/her spouse, or member of his/her immediate family (this is in addition to, and has no effect on, the burial funds exclusion (POMS SI 01130.400 A. 2.));**
- ix. Separately identifiable burial funds of \$1500 for the applicant and the applicant's spouse (but the maximum of \$1,500 that can be excluded as set aside for the burial expenses of the individual must be reduced by the face value of any insurance policy on the life of the individual that is excluded under the exclusion for life insurance, and by the face value of any burial insurance policy for the burial expenses of the individual (POMS SI 01130.300 B. 4.));**

- x. **Certain prepaid burial contracts;**
  - xi. **One vehicle used for transportation (regardless of year, make, model, or value);**
  - xii. **Household goods and personal effects;**
  - xiii. **Property essential to self-support;**
  - xiv. **Stock held by native Alaskans in Alaska regional or village corporations effective January 1, 1992 when the stock becomes a resource;**
  - xv. **Retained retroactive SSI or RSDI benefits;**
  - xvi. **Dedicated accounts;**
  - xvii. **Restitution payments for misused Title II, Title VIII, and Title XVI benefits;**
  - xviii. **Radiation Exposure Compensation Trust Fund payments;**
  - xix. **German reparations payments made to World War II Holocaust survivors;**
  - xx. **Austrian social insurance payments;**
  - xxi. **Japanese-American and Aleutian restitution payments;**
  - xxii. **Federal disaster assistance received on account of a Presidentially declared major disaster, including interest accumulated thereon;**
  - xxiii. **Cash (including accrued interest) and in-kind replacement received from any source at any time to replace or repair lost, damaged, or stolen excluded resources;**
  - xxiv. **Certain items excluded from both income and resources by other Federal statutes;**
  - xxv. **Agent Orange settlement payments to qualifying veterans and survivors;**
  - xxvi. **Victim's compensation payments;**
  - xxvii. **State and local relocation assistance payments;**
  - xxviii. **Tax refunds related to Earned Income Tax Credits;**
  - xxix. **Grants, Scholarships, Fellowships, and Gifts;**
  - xxx. **Ricky Ray Hemophilia Relief Fund;**
  - xxxi. **Payments to Veterans' Children with Certain Birth Defects;**
  - xxxii. **State Annuities for Certain Veterans.**
- b. **As mentioned above, the most frequently encountered excluded resources will be the homestead, a vehicle, household goods and personal effects, life insurance up to \$1,500 in face value, separately identifiable burial funds up**

to \$1,500, less any amount of life insurance excluded, and burial spaces. But as the list above shows, there are many additional resources which, from case to case, can be excluded. The chart at POMS SI 01110.210 has links to more details regarding some of the more seldom encountered excluded resources. The Medicare Savings Programs' resource limits will be affected by Sections 112, and 115 of the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-275) (MIPPA). Section 112 of MIPPA provides that, as of January 1, 2010, the resource limits for QMB will be the same as the resource limits for resources the Low-Income Subsidy of the Medicare Prescription Drug Program ("Medicare Part D"). 42 U.S.C. §1396d(p)(1)(C). Thus, as of January 1, 2010, the resource limits for the QMB will be \$7,790 for an individual and \$12,440 for a couple. They will be indexed for inflation. (Section 112 of MIPPA refers to 42 U.S.C. §1396(p)(1)(C), which is the resource limit for QMB. The sections of the U.S.Code that define SLMBs and QIs – 42 U.S.C. §§1396a(a)(10)(E)(iii) and (iv)(II) – appear to incorporate the QMB resource limits, so this MIPPA change should also apply to SLMB and QI eligibility.) Section 115 of Public Law 110-275 amended 42 United States Code §1396p(b)(1)(B)(ii), so as to prohibit from January 1, 2010 onward, the use estate recovery regarding benefits under the Medicare Savings Programs. (Texas never exercised the option to use estate recovery in regard to the Medicare Savings Programs.)

- c. To meet the QMB eligibility definition, the person must be entitled to Medicare Part A. Included is the relatively small group of aged persons who are not automatically entitled to Part A coverage, but who have bought (or could buy) Medicare Part A protection by paying a monthly premium. Not included in QMB are "Qualified Disabled Working Individuals" (QDWIs). Under 42 U.S.C. §1395i-2a, these individuals remain eligible for Medicare. They are individuals who have lost entitlement to Social Security Disability Benefits because they have earnings that exceed the "Substantial Gainful Activity" (SGA) threshold. (In 2009, this threshold is \$980 monthly income for a disabled person who is not blind, and \$1,640 monthly income for a person who meets the blindness criteria of Social Security.) A person can be eligible for Medicare due to age (65); disability (receipt of 24 months of Social Security disability benefits which allows for Medicare eligibility with the 25<sup>th</sup> month), blindness, or due to end-stage kidney disease or amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (Lou Gehrig's disease).

- d. For QMBs, Medicaid is required to pay Medicare premiums and cost-sharing charges as follows: (1) Part B monthly premiums; (2) Part A monthly premiums paid by the limited number of persons not automatically entitled to Part A protection; (3) coinsurance and deductibles under Part A and Part B including the Medicare hospital deductible, the Part B deductible, and the Parts A and B coinsurance; and (4) coinsurance and deductibles that Medicare Advantage plans charge their enrollees.
  - e. Questions regarding QMB (circle the correct answer):
    - i. Only persons who are sixty-five (65) years of age can qualify for QMB, because there is no basis for qualifying for Medicare for persons who are not yet sixty-five (65).
      - 1. True
      - 2. False
    - ii. If a person eligible for QMB has to pay a premium for Medicare Part A QMB will pay the Medicare Part A and Part B premiums.
      - 1. True
      - 2. False
7. Specified low-income Medicare beneficiaries (SLMBs).
- a. Medicaid is also required to pay Medicare Part B premiums for SLMBs. These are persons meeting the QMB criteria except that their income is slightly over the QMB limit. The resource criteria for SLMB are the same as for QMB. The SLMB income limit is 120 percent of the Federal poverty line. SLMB is limited to payment of the Medicare Part B premiums.
  - b. Questions regarding SLMB (circle the correct answer):
    - i. What one statement is true about the homestead exclusion under SLMB?
      - 1. The house cannot have more than one bathroom.
      - 2. The lot cannot be more than one typical city lot in size.
      - 3. If the applicant owns a lot in northeastern Louisiana as well as the house and lot in Texas, both lots can be considered part of the excluded homestead.
      - 4. There is no limit on the value, number of rooms, size of dwelling, nor number of acres, but the only land that can be excluded is land that is contiguous with the land on which the homestead dwelling sits can be excluded (along with the

dwelling).

- ii. **What one statement is true of the vehicle exclusion under SLMB?**
  - 1. **To be excluded, the vehicle must be made in America.**
  - 2. **To be excluded, the vehicle cannot have more than two doors.**
  - 3. **One vehicle used for transportation regardless of year, make, model, or value, is excluded.**
  - 4. **To be excluded, the vehicle cannot be newer than five years old.**

**8. Qualifying individuals (QIs).**

- a. **The Balanced Budget Act of 1997 required State Medicaid Programs, effective January 1, 1998 through December 31, 2002, to pay Part B premiums for beneficiaries with incomes of less than 135 percent of poverty. These persons are referred to as QIs. The QI program remains in effect by virtue of Section 111 of the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008 (MIPPA), which extended this program to December of 2009. This Section of MIPPA is codified at 42 U.S.C. §1396a(a)(10)(E)(iv). Unlike the other Medicare Savings Programs, QI is not an “entitlement” and hence Congress from time to time has extended it. The QI program’s benefit is the same as the benefit of the SLMB program – payment of the Medicare Part B premium. (For a few years, there was a program called “QI -2” (“Qualifying Individuals – 2”) which had income limits of 175% FPIL and which paid a small fraction of the Medicare Part B premium. The federal authority for QI-2 expired on December 31, 2002.). Just as under QMB and SLMB, the QI general resource exclusion (after excluding those resources that do not count) is twice the SSI general resource exclusion. QI excludes the same resources as QMB and SLMB.**

**b. Questions regarding QI (circle the correct answer):**

- i. **Under QI, there is no exclusion from resources for any value of life insurance.**
  - 1. **True**
  - 2. **False**
- ii. **Under QI, there is no exclusion from resources for any burial space for the applicant.**
  - 1. **True**
  - 2. **False**

3.

9. **Qualified Disabled Working Individuals (QDWIs).**

- a. As noted, Medicaid is authorized to provide protection against Medicare Part A premiums for QDWIs. QDWIs are persons who were previously entitled to Medicare on the basis of a disability, who lost their entitlement based on earnings from work, but who continue to have the disabling condition. This occurs in the situation where a person became entitled to Medicare by virtue of having received 24 months of Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits. Then, if the person begins to have earnings above the threshold at which earnings are considered evidence that the person is no longer disabled, the person usually becomes ineligible for SSDI. *Earned* income above the threshold is considered evidence that the SSDI recipient is now able to engage in “substantial gainful activity” (SGA). A person who is able to engage in SGA is not entitled to SSDI, since the ability to engage in SGA means that disability has ended or has been overcome. The SGA threshold increases each year. In calendar year 2009, the threshold will be \$980 monthly for disabled persons who are not blind. For persons who meet the blindness standard under SSDI, the threshold will be \$1,640. *Unearned* income – such as interest or dividends – does not count toward the SGA threshold. Under the “Qualified Disabled Working Individual Program” (QDWI) Medicaid is required to pay the Medicare Part A premium for persons who lost eligibility for SSDI due to *earnings* above the threshold if their countable income does not exceed 200 percent of the Federal poverty line (FPIL), their resources are below 200 percent of the SSI limit, and they are not otherwise eligible for Medicaid. For QDWI eligibility, countable income includes *both* earned and unearned income. Because of the narrow income band – countable income (earned and unearned) cannot exceed 200% of FPIL, yet the Medicare enrollee has to have lost SSDI due to *earned* income above the SGA threshold – there are very few QDWIs. One study at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century showed in the entire U.S. fewer than 50 QDWIs. On the other hand, there are over 200,000 persons in Texas alone who are eligible for one of the three Medicare Savings Programs. The Social Security Bulletin, Volume 64, Number 3 (2001/2002, Pp. 76 – 80) showed that at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, in the U.S. as a whole, there were 7.8 million eligible Americans actually enrolled in QMB or SLMB, and 2.75 million who were eligible but not enrolled.

**Note:** The change in resource limits that MIPPA will bring about for QMBs, SLMBs, and QIs, effective January 1, 2010 – see paragraph 6 b. above – does not appear in store for QDWIs. The statutory section that provides the resource limits for QDWIs – 42 U.S.C. §1396d(s)(3) – refers explicitly to the SSI resource limits and Section 112 of MIPPA – 42 U.S.C. §1396d(p)(1)(C) – did not modify the QDWI resource limit provision.

- b. Questions about QDWI (circle the correct answer):**
- i. Under QDWI, what is the importance of the Social Security Disability “SGA” threshold?**
    - 1. It is the amount of earnings, at which point a person receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits will be considered to no longer be disabled.**
    - 2. It is the amount of earnings that a person must exceed in order to be eligible for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits.**
  - ii. What is the benefit of the QDWI program?**
    - 1. Payment of the Medicare Part A premium.**
    - 2. Payment of the Medicare Part B premium.**
    - 3. Payment of the personal needs allowance.**
    - 4. Payment of the community spouse minimum monthly maintenance needs allowance.**
- 10. As noted, in the Medicare Savings Programs, SSI rules are used to determine what counts as income and what counts as resources.**
- a. These Medicare Savings Programs all have income and resource rules that follow the SSI methods for determining what counts as income and resources. The POMS section that has the excluded resources chart, POMS SI 01110.210, has been addressed above.**
  - b. The POMS chart that lists exclusions of unearned income is at POMS SI 00830.099. Commonly encountered excluded types of unearned income are food stamps, means-tested benefits (such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)), energy assistance, housing assistance, payments under the**

Foster Grandparents Program, payments under the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), payments under the Senior Companion Program, assistance under the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program, victims' compensation payments, and Holocaust reparation payments. However, the list at POMS SI 00830.099 has additional entries, and links for details concerning each of the unearned income exclusions.

- c. One consequence of the use of SSI methods for determining income in the Medicare Savings Programs is that under POMS SI 00810.420, there is an exclusion of \$20 of monthly unearned income. An eligible couple does not receive double the \$20 exclusion; the \$20 exclusion is used once whether one spouse or both spouses will be or are applying. This means that, in calculating eligibility for a married couple in which each spouse is applying for a Medicare Savings Program, the unearned income of the spouses is totaled and then the \$20 exclusion of unearned income is taken against the combined unearned income of the spouses together.
- d. *Earned* income also is subject to certain exclusions under the POMS, and hence, under the Medicare Savings Programs. The POMS that treats the earned income exclusions is POMS SI 00820.500. First, if there was little (or no) unearned income, whatever is unused of the \$20 exclusion of unearned income is used to reduce earned income. Under POMS SI 00820.500, there is also an exclusion of the first \$65 of monthly earned income and of one-half the rest of monthly earned income. As with the \$20 exclusion of unearned income, the earned income of both spouses – if both spouses are applying – is totaled and then the \$65 exclusion for earned income is taken against the total earned income of both spouses and then the exclusion of one-half the rest of the earned income is taken against the total earned income of both spouses.
- e. Social Security benefits are an example of unearned income, and thus \$20 is excluded from the gross Social Security benefits in calculating countable income. The gross Social Security benefit is the value of cash received from Social Security by direct deposit or by check, *plus* the amount of any

Medicare premium(s) deducted from the gross Social Security benefit. Medicare premiums which are deducted from the gross Social Security benefit are added back in to determine the *gross* Social Security benefit, which is the amount against which the \$20 exclusion of unearned income is taken.

- f. Although the resource provisions of the POMS are useful for determining how resources will be treated under the Medicare Savings Programs, remember that one very important difference is this: There is *no* transfer of resources penalty under the Medicare Savings Programs. Under SSI, there may be a transfer of resources penalty if property is given away within 36 months of applying for SSI. The SSI transfer of resources penalty – which does not apply to the Medicare Savings Programs – is covered by POMS SI 01150.000. Under the Medicare Savings Programs there is no penalty for giving away resources to become eligible.
- g. SSI income and resource provisions are also covered in Chapter Ten (Medicaid and Supplemental Security Income).
- h. If only one spouse of a couple is a Medicare beneficiary, the couple's combined countable income is first compared to the couple income limit. If that limit is not exceeded, then the individual's countable income is compared to the individual income limit. If that limit is not exceeded, income eligibility exists.
- i. Questions regarding the applicability of SSI rules in determining income and resources under the Medicare Savings Programs (circle the correct answer):
  - i. Non-attorneys are allowed to access the Social Security Administration's Program Operations Manual System (POMS).
    - 1. True
    - 2. False
  - ii. The transfer of resources penalty that is used in the SSI program is also used in the Medicare Savings Programs.
    - 1. True

**2. False**

**11. The income limits for these programs change on or before April 1, the resource limits do not usually change from year to year, and the value of the benefits changes every January. (MIPPA will result in some resource limit changes – described in paragraph 6 b. – effective January 1, 2010.)**

**a. The income limits for the Medicare Savings Programs are based on the federal poverty income limits (FPIL). Because the FPIL increases each April 1, that is when the income limits for these programs increase. Since the vast majority of the beneficiaries of these programs receive Social Security, the annual Social Security cost-of-living increase (which occurs every January 1) is disregarded until April 1. At that time, an automatic review of computer tape data occurs, to update the amount of countable Social Security. The value of the benefits under these programs increases each January 1, because that is when the Medicare premiums, deductibles, and cost-sharing amounts increase.**

**b. Questions about the income limits, resource limits, and value of benefits under the Medicare Savings Programs (circle the correct answer):**

**i. The income limits are based on the federal poverty income limit.**

**1. True**

**2. False**

**ii. The income limits change every April 1.**

**1. True**

**2. False**

**iii. The value of the benefits changes every January 1.**

**1. True**

**2. False**

**12. Income limits effective March 1, 2009 (until February 28, 2010). The monthly income limits for these programs as of March 1, 2009, are: QMB: Individual – Not more than \$903; couple – Not more than \$1,215. SLMB: Individual – Less than**

**\$1,083; couple – Less than \$1,457. QI: Individual – Less than \$1,219; couple – Less than \$1,640. QDWI: Individual – Not more than \$1,805; couple – Not more than \$2,429. These levels are 100% FPIL (QMB); 120% FPIL (SLMB); 135% FPIL (QI-1); and 200% FPIL (QDWI). For QMB and QDWI, the countable income can be at or below the limit. For SLMB and QI, the countable income must be below the limit.**

**The following chart displays these income limits in a table:**

<b>Program</b>	<b>Monthly Income Limit</b>	
	<b>Single Person</b>	<b>Couple</b>
<b>QMB</b>	<b>\$ 903</b>	<b>\$ 1,215</b>
<b>SLMB</b>	<b>1,083</b>	<b>1,457</b>
<b>QI</b>	<b>1,219</b>	<b>1,640</b>
<b>QDWI</b>	<b>1,805</b>	<b>2,429</b>

13. a. In calculating income, if a person is receiving Social Security and (as is typical) has the standard Medicare Part B premium deducted from the Social Security benefit, the actual countable Social Security benefit is \$96.40 higher than the amount of Social Security direct deposited into the account of the beneficiary, or received by check.
- b. As noted above, because SSI rules are used to arrive at countable income, there is the general exclusion of \$20 of unearned income. The figures in paragraph 12 do not already have this \$20 factored in.
- c. Question regarding the calculation of income under the Medicare Savings Programs:
  - i. Typically the Social Security benefit of a Medicare beneficiary is higher than the amount that Social Security direct deposits or sends in the form of a check.
    1. True

**2. False**

**14. As noted above, because of the use of SSI methods for arriving at countable income, if the individual (or couple) has earned income, the first \$65 of monthly earned income is disregarded, and then one-half of the rest of the earned income is disregarded. (If unearned income did not totally consume the \$20 disregard, whatever remains of that \$20 disregard is also deducted from earned income.) Example: Couple has monthly unearned income (all Social Security) of \$1100. This is the gross Social Security benefit. The couple has monthly combined earned income from a home business of \$225. Countable income is \$1,100 minus \$20 (thus, total countable unearned income of \$1,080) plus countable earned income (which is \$225 - \$65, minus ½ the remainder; resulting in \$160 (which is \$225 - \$65) minus one-half of \$160, which is \$80). Thus, countable income is \$1,160, which is below the \$1,167 income limit for a couple for QMB. Both spouses have end stage kidney disease and are enrolled in Medicare. Countable resources are \$5,500. The couple qualifies for QMB.**

**15. Remember:**

**a. In calculating income for a couple under the Medicare Savings Programs, the \$20 exclusion for unearned income and the exclusion of the first \$65 of earned income and one-half the rest of earned income can only be taken once in the chain of calculations – not one time for each spouse, but rather one time for the spouses together. If unearned income is so low that the \$20 exclusion is not fully used to off-set unearned income, then the remaining part of the \$20 is deducted from earned income, before the \$65 is deducted for earned income.**

**b. Question regarding calculation of income, in the case of a married couple:**

**i. Since a married couple involves two people, in calculating their income under the Medicare Savings Program, the \$20 exclusion for unearned income is taken fully (\$20) twice – it is taken against unearned income of one spouse and then fully again against the**

**unearned income of the second spouse.**

**1. True**

**2. False**

**ii. Since a married couple involves two people, in calculating their income under the Medicare Savings Program, the \$65 and one-half rest exclusion for earned income is taken fully (\$65 and one-half the rest) twice – it is taken against unearned income of one spouse and then fully again against the unearned income of the second spouse.**

**1. True**

**2. False**

**16. The value of the benefits in the year 2009. Because the benefit of these programs is payment of all or some of the Medicare premiums, deductibles, and coinsurance amounts, when those amounts increase each January 1, the value of the benefit of these programs increases. Keep in mind that persons who are eligible for QMB, SLMB, or QI are also eligible for the “extra help” – the low-income subsidy – under Medicare Part D.**

**17. QMB’s benefits. QMB, for persons certified for it, pays all of the person’s Medicare Part A and Part B cost-sharing – premiums, co-payments, and deductibles. For most persons certified for QMB, the Medicare Part A premium is not a cost the person pays. Usually, Medicare beneficiaries have “paid” for Medicare Part A, through payroll taxes. But assume that a person certified for QMB has to pay the Medicare Part A premium. Assume it is the full, year 2009 Part A premium (\$443 monthly), and not just the Part A premium for those who have at least 30 credits of Social Security coverage (a \$244 monthly premium). For such a “QMB,” the value of the benefit would be at least the \$443 monthly Part A premium, the \$96.40 standard monthly Part B premium, each Part A hospital deductible incurred (\$1,068 per benefit period), all hospital co-insurance amounts (\$267 per day for days 61 – 90, and \$534 per day for days 91 – 150), the skilled nursing facility copayment (\$133.50 per day for days 21 – 100), the 20% deductible for durable medical**

equipment, the \$5 co-pay for hospice prescriptions, the 5% co-pay for hospice inpatient respite care, the \$135.00 Part B annual deductible, the 20% Part B co-pay for most doctor services, the 20% co-pay for Part B outpatient physical, occupational, and speech-language therapy, the 50% co-pay for outpatient mental health services, and all other Medicare Part B co-pays. (Most QMBs do not have a premium for Medicare Part A, so for most “QMBs” the benefit eliminates payment of the other items listed. But, if a QMB does have a Medicare Part A premium (either the full \$443 monthly premium, or the reduced \$244 premium), the QMB program pays *that* as well.)

18. **SLMB’s benefits, and QI-s.** Both the SLMB program and the QI program have the same benefit: Payment of the standard monthly Part B premium. In the year 2009, this is \$96.40 monthly. (Although Medicare beneficiaries who file an income tax return and who have income greater than \$85,000 (single) or \$170,000 (married) pay a higher Medicare Part B premium, such persons, by virtue of that income, would be ineligible for any of the Medicare Savings Programs.)
19. **QDWI’s benefit.** The benefit of QDWI is payment of the Medicare Part A premium. Thus, whichever premium the “QDWI” would have to pay – the full \$443 monthly premium or the reduced \$244 monthly premium – that is the value of the QDWI benefit.
20. **Once a person is certified for QMB, SLMB, QI, or QDWI, the Medicare premium that the person was paying and which is a benefit of the Medicare Savings Program for which the person qualifies, will be paid by the program. That means, for instance, that QMBs, SLMBs, and “QIs” will no longer see the \$96.40 reduction in their Social Security benefit, which occurs due to the standard monthly Medicare Part B premium being taken out of the Social Security benefit.**
21. **Benefits under the SLMB and QI programs can be paid retroactive for three months, if the person would have been eligible in those earlier three months before**

the person applied. This is provided for at 1 Texas Administrative Code §§358.204 (2) and 358.220 (b). QMB and QDWI do not have this “three-month prior” coverage. 1 Texas Administrative Code §§358.201 (f); 358.203 (b).

22. **The application form.** Applicants for these programs can use application form H1200 EZ. It is at <http://www.dads.state.tx.us/handbooks/meh/forms/index.asp?form=H1200-EZ>. The application normally can be handled entirely by mail and phone; no face-to-face interview is required. *As with all applications for medical benefits, all information supplied must be truthful, and is subject to verification.* The application form should also be available at the local office of the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC). The Web address <https://www.211texas.org/211/search.do> is where one can type in the service or program needed and the zip code of person applying to locate an HHSC office that can accept the person’s application.
23. **Appeals.** The appeals process for these programs is governed by the same rules, as for regular Medicaid and long-term care Medicaid. These rules are discussed in Chapter Fourteen. (Appeals, Hearings, and Administrative Law). Benefits counselors can handle these appeals at the administrative level if the client requests.
24. **A few words about Medigap policies and the Medicare Savings Programs.** The Medicare law is Title XVIII of the Social Security Act. It is codified at 42 United States Code §§1395. As noted at the outset, the Medicaid law is Title XIX of the Social Security Act. It is codified at 42 United States Code §§1396. Medigap policies (formally called “Medicare supplemental health insurance policies”) are regulated by a part of the Medicare law, namely 42 U.S.C. §1395ss.
25. **At 42 U.S.C. §1395ss(q)(5)(A), one finds a requirement that Medigap policies be capable of suspension without penalty for a 24 month period, if a person becomes eligible for a Medicare Savings Program.** This section of the Medicare law states, “Each Medicare supplemental policy shall provide that benefits and premiums

**under the policy shall be suspended at the request of the policyholder for the period (not to exceed 24 months) in which the policyholder has applied for and is determined to be entitled to medical assistance under subchapter XIX [the Medicaid program].” Because the Medicare Savings Programs are actually Medicaid programs, this right to suspend a Medigap policy covers people who enroll in a Medicare Savings Program.**

- 26. In order to benefit from this right to suspend a Medigap policy, the person must notify the issuer of the policy within 90 days after the date that the person becomes entitled to Medicaid (within 90 days after the person becomes entitled to a Medicare Savings Program). If the person ceases to be entitled to a Medicare Savings Program (or to other Medicaid) the person has a right to be reinstated to the Medigap policy, if the person notifies the issuer of the policy within 90 days after the end of Medicaid entitlement. As noted, these concepts are set forth in 42 U.S.C. §1395ss(q)(5)(A).**
- 27. The terms of the Medigap policy to which a person has a right to reinstatement must not require any waiting period for pre-existing conditions, must provide for coverage which is substantially equivalent to the coverage the person had before the person suspended the Medigap policy, and must provide for premiums which are at least as favorable as the person had before the Medigap policy was suspended.**
- 28. a. Another aspect of the relationship between Medigap policies and the Medicare Savings Programs concerns the prohibition against selling a Medigap policy that duplicates Medicaid benefits. Under 42 U.S.C. §1395 ss(d)(3)(A)(i), it is unlawful to sell a Medigap policy that duplicates coverage that a person would have under Medicare or Medicaid. However, this prohibition is not violated if the State Medicaid program pays the premiums for the Medigap policy, or if the person is entitled to QMB and the Medigap policy provides for coverage of outpatient prescription drugs, or the person is only entitled to payment of Medicare Part B premiums. Thus, it is lawful to**

sell a Medigap policy to a person entitled to QMB if the Medigap policy covers outpatient prescription drugs. However, with the arrival of the Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit under Medicare Part D, and given that eligibility for QMB means eligibility for premium free access to the standard drug plan, the purchase of a Medigap policy will seldom if ever make sense for a person eligible for QMB. The Texas Department of Insurance, in its booklet “Medicare Supplement Insurance Handbook and Rate Guide” states, “You do not need Medigap insurance if you are in the QMB program.” It is lawful to sell a Medigap policy to persons entitled to SLMB or QI, whether or not the policy provides for coverage of outpatient prescription drugs.

- b. Question about Medigap insurance and the QMB program (circle the correct answer):
- i. What does the Texas Department of Insurance state concerning Medigap insurance in regard to persons who have QMB?
  - ii. Such persons do not need a Medigap policy.
  - iii. Such persons definitely should purchase a Medigap policy.
29. Of course, the decision of whether a Medigap policy should be bought is one that a person entitled to SLMB, QI, and QDWI Program would have to evaluate, based on individual circumstances.
30. Medicare Part D. Under Medicare Part D, all recipients of QMB, SLMB, and QI will qualify as “full-premium low-income subsidy eligible individuals.” They will not have to pay a premium for the standard Part D plan, nor a deductible.
31. The Legal Hotline for Texans provides back-up and support. Any benefits counselor of a Texas area agency on aging who needs back-up and support can call the Legal Hotline for Texans at 1-800-880-9797.

**Answer Key to Questions:**

**Paragraph 1:**

**The Social Security Act, State Medicaid Plan, Texas Secretary of State, MIPPA  
(3, 1, 4, 3)**

**Paragraph 2:**

**To receive the help of the Medicare Savings Programs, a person does need to enroll or be enrolled in Medicare.**

**In Texas, all of the Medicare Savings Programs are exempt from Medicaid Estate Recovery.**

**Persons who are eligible for QMB, SLMB, or QI are eligible for “extra help” under Medicare Part D.**

**(True, True, True)**

**Paragraph 6:**

**It is not true that only persons who are sixty-five (65) years of age can qualify for QMB, because there are bases for qualifying for Medicare for persons who are not yet sixty-five (65) – disability, end stage renal disease, Lou Gehrig’s disease. If a person has to pay a premium for Medicare Part A and the person is eligible for QMB, QMB will pay the Medicare Part A and Part B premiums.**

**(False, True)**

**Paragraph 7:**

**The homestead exclusion under SLMB has no limit on the value, number of rooms, size of dwelling, nor number of acres, but the only land that can be excluded is land that is contiguous with the land on which the homestead dwelling sits.**

**In regard to the vehicle exclusion under SLMB, one vehicle regardless of year, make, model, or value, is excluded.**

**(4,3)**

**Paragraph 8:**

**Under QI, there is an exclusion of \$1,500 face value of life insurance. There is also a burial space exclusion.**

**(False, False)**

**Paragraph 9:**

**Under QDWI, the SGA threshold is the amount of earnings, at which point a person receiving Social Security Disability Benefits (SSDI) will be considered to no longer be disabled.**

**The benefit of the QDWI program is payment of the Medicare Part A premium.**

**(1,1)**

**Paragraph 10:**

**Non-attorneys *are* allowed to access the Social Security Administration's Program Operations Manual System (POMS).**

**The transfer of resources penalty that is used in the SSI program is *not* used in the Medicare Savings Programs.**

**(True, False)**

**Paragraph 11:**

**Medicare Savings Programs' income limits are based on the federal poverty income limit.**

**The income limits change every April 1.**

**The value of the benefits changes every January 1.**

**(True, True, True)**

**Paragraph 13:**

**Typically the Social Security benefit of a Medicare beneficiary is higher than the amount that Social Security direct deposits or sends in the form of a check.**

**(True)**

**Paragraph 15:**

**Even in the case of a married couple, both of whom are applying for a Medicare Savings Program, the \$20 exclusion for unearned income and the \$65 and one-half rest exclusion for earned income (\$65 and one-half the rest) are each taken fully only once.**

**(“True” is correct for both questions)**

**Paragraph 28:**

**What does the Texas Department of Insurance state regarding Medigap insurance in regard to persons who have QMB?**

**Such persons do not need a Medigap policy.**

**(1)**