

Your Guide to Public Benefits in Virginia

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 additional assistance, call the Virginia Insurance Counseling and Assistance Program (VICAP), also known as the Virginia State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP), to speak with a counselor. To locate the counselor in your community, call the Virginia Department for the Aging toll-free at **1-800-552-3402** or log on to www.vda.virginia.gov/vicap2.asp.

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: Call your local Department of Social Services (DSS) to request an application and to schedule an interview. To find the number of your local DSS office, call toll-free at **1-900-552-3431** or **804-726-7000** (in Richmond). You can also log on to www.dss.virginia.gov/localagency to find your local DSS office.

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 additional assistance and to locate a Virginia Insurance Counseling and Assistance Program counselor in your community, call the Virginia Department for the Aging toll-free at **1-800-552-3402**.

VA Statewide Company-Sponsored Prescription Drug Assistance

Benefit: Virginia offers programs by drug companies as alternatives to the cards

offered in the Medicare Drug Discount Cards Program.

Who can apply: These cards are available at no charge, but only to Medicare recipients who do not already have a pharmacy benefit through private insurance or the Medicaid program.

How to apply: There are eight programs with different eligibility criteria and benefits. For a complete description of all VA discount card programs, log on to www.vda.virginia.gov/prescripassist1.asp or call toll-free at **1-800-552-3402** and ask to speak with a Virginia Insurance Counseling and Assistance Program counselor.

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: Call the Department of Social Services (DSS) in the city in which you live. To find the number of your local DSS office, call toll-free at **1-800-552-3431** or **804-726-7000** (in Richmond). You can also log on to www.dss.virginia.gov/localagency to find your local DSS office.



Help with Your Home

State Property Tax Assistance

Benefit: This tax relief may be in the form of a tax exemption, tax deferral or both. A few localities also provide housing grants for older or disabled renters.

Who can apply: Homeowners age 65 and older and homeowners with disabilities.

How to apply: Call your local Commissioner of Revenue or other local assessment official for the exact date and local eligibility rules for your county, city, or town. You can find their telephone number in your local phone-book or log on to www.vacomrev.com and select districts and localities for a complete list of local offices.

Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program

Benefit: Pays home heating bills for those in need. It pays for any heating source including oil, gas, kerosene, wood, and electricity. The Virginia Department of Social Services' Energy Assistance Program helps older adults and those with disabilities pay heating and cooling costs and assists with weatherization projects.

Who can apply: Qualified low-income older adults with annual income less than \$13,520 for one person, or \$18,200 for two people.

How to apply: For detailed information on types of assistance, contact your Regional Department of Social Services Office. For a complete list of local offices, log on to www.dss.virginia.gov/localagency or call 804-726-7000.

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

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

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: Apply online at www.vafood.org or call toll-free at 1-800-552-3431 for the number of your

local social services department or your local Area Agency on Aging.

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 Virginia's older adults, call the Department for the Aging toll-free at **1-800-552-3402** or visit the SeniorNavigator webpage at www.seniornavigator.com.

Legal Help

If you need a lawyer but have limited resources, contact Legal Aid toll-free at **1-866-534-5243** (in-state only).

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



Benefits Outreach Program
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1-888-OUR-AARP (1-888-687-2277)
Email: 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.