



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

Illinois Cares Rx, the state's program to help seniors and people with disabilities pay for prescription drugs is changing on September 1, 2011. The budget recently signed by the Governor cut funding for the program in half. The good news is that the program will continue to provide vital assistance to more than 160,000 low income people. However, as a result of the funding cuts, about 43,000 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).

The changes that take effect on **September 1, 2011** are:

- 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
- Increasing the co-payment amounts for most types of covered prescription drugs.

How will you find out about the changes?

Everyone currently in the program should receive a letter from the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS), the state agency that runs the program. All the letters explain the changes and include information about local and state agencies to call for assistance.

- 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.
- People remaining in the program will get a letter with the new co-payment amounts.

How can you prepare now?

It is important not to wait - make a plan during August for how you will pay for your drugs beginning September 1.

DON'T panic, change the way you take your medications, or drop your Part D plan.

DO talk to someone who knows what is happening to get the facts straight about your situation and the options you may have.

1. Watch for a letter from HFS and keep it. Call with any questions or for help looking into other options.
2. Check your income – if it is less than 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 discount cards available from many sources and programs at your local or chain pharmacy (like the \$4 generics.)
6. If you have Medicare and you are losing Illinois Cares Rx benefits, you may switch to a different Part D plan for the rest of the year if you find one that saves you money.

TIP: Ask your doctor for 90-day prescriptions and fill them in August, before your co-pays change on September 1. You will pay the lower (current) amounts for a supply of drugs that will last you for September through November.

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). 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.) If you do not qualify for Seniors Ride Free, you may still get a reduced fare card for seniors.