

Stimulus Check and Government Benefits

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The majority of eligible Americans cannot wait to receive their \$1,200 Economic Impact payment, (“Payment”, i.e. stimulus check), as part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, and rightly so. The financial effect of the COVID-19 virus has been devastating and is being felt far and wide by most.

But what if you are one of those eligible Americans who has also qualified for government benefits like Medical Assistance (Medicaid or MA) or Community Health Choices (CHS) Home and Community Based Services (HCBS)? Are you looking forward to that check?

If not, it may be because you are wondering: Will the stimulus check count as income and adversely affect my benefits for the month received, or just get paid to a facility?! Fortunately, the answer is NO! The Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS) issued guidance on April 17, 2020 directly answering that question. Although the payment must be reported to the County Assistance Office, it will be excluded from MA eligibility or payment calculations.

- If, for instance, you are receiving Community Health Choices services in the home, you will not be over the income limit for the month in which it was received.
- If you are receiving care in a Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF), the payment will NOT be included as part of your Patient Pay Responsibility (PPR).

Ok, that is good news, but the answer may lead you to wonder: Then if the check will not be counted as income, will it adversely affect my resource eligibility? Again, the good news is NO, at least not right away! The portion of the Payment spent within twelve (12) months of receipt will be excluded for MA eligibility purposes. However, any portion of the Payment that remains in your account after twelve (12) months will be considered a countable resource!

So what can you do with it? Almost anything other than gift the entire amount. You may purchase items like furniture or clothing, take a vacation or even gift small amounts each month.

If you have other questions about the stimulus check, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) issued further guidance on their website: <https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/economic-impact-payments-what-you-need-to-know>. If you have other questions about MA, HCBS or the care and keeping of a loved one in need, please check out our website: GrayElderLaw.com or call the office: 412-458-6000. We are still open for business!