

Important Information about Help with Medicare Premiums

"Michael J. Astrue, Commissioner of Social Security, and Chubby Checker, Grammy Award winner and rock and roll legend, today launched a new campaign to inform millions of Americans about a new "twist" in the law that makes it easier to qualify for *extra help* with Medicare prescription drug costs. The *extra help* program currently provides assistance to more than nine million senior and disabled Americans -- saving them an average of almost \$4,000 a year on their Medicare prescription drug plan costs.

"The changes in the Medicare law that take effect this month will allow hundreds of thousands of Americans who are struggling to pay their prescription drug costs to get *extra help* during these tough economic times," said Commissioner Astrue. "I am thrilled that Chubby Checker has volunteered to help us spread this important message through a new television, radio, and Internet spot as well as pamphlets and posters."

"Listen up, America! For 50 years, people of all ages and backgrounds have danced the Twist," Chubby Checker said. "Now it's important everyone learn about this new twist in the law. Check it out at www.socialsecurity.gov."

To qualify for *extra help*, people must meet certain resource and income limits. The new Medicare law eases those requirements in two ways. First, it eliminates the cash value of life insurance from counting as a resource. Second, it eliminates the assistance people receive from others to pay for household expenses, such as food, rent, mortgage or utilities, from counting as income. There also is another important "twist" in the law. The application for *extra help* can now start the application process for Medicare Savings Programs -- state programs that provide help with other Medicare costs. These programs help pay Medicare Part B (medical insurance) premiums. For some people, the Medicare Savings Programs also pay Medicare Part A (hospital insurance) premiums, if any, and Part A and B deductibles and co-payments."

Depending on one's point of view the "new twist in the law" may probably be better characterized as a much needed "break" for numerous Medicare beneficiaries suffering in today's hard economic times. SSA has conveniently organized the info on Medicare Part D Subsidy at <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/prescriptionhelp/>

MEDICARE iClaim

Effective March 6, 2010, insured claimants (or their established third-party representatives) may also use the iClaim application to file for Medicare premium-free Part A (only), **or** Part A **and** Part B, without having to file for cash benefits. For detailed policies and instructions about online Medicare-only claims, see **GN 00204.059**.

Also, the time period for when a completed MCS application becomes inactive is reduced from 30 business days after adjudication (i.e., from when the MCS screens are locked) to 3 days. This change reduces the wait time for an iClaim application to be automatically purged from the Internet Database, so an applicant can establish a new online claim sooner.

For example, applicants may file another online DIB application as early as three business days after a prior iClaim DIB denial is adjudicated."

To apply for Medicare **only**, insured beneficiary must:

- be at least 64 years and 8 months old,
- want to sign up for Medicare,
- not want to start receiving Social Security benefits in the next four months **and**
- [live in the United States](#).