



Dear Stan,

In four months I will turn 65. I hear I am eligible for Medicare. The business I work for now is so small it doesn't have a human resources department. Now I have several health insurance questions. What do I need to do to properly sign up for Medicare?

*Alicia
Los Lunas*

Report Medicare Related Fraud by calling the New Mexico Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) at

1-800-432-2080

The SMP will provide you with the information you need to PREVENT, DETECT and REPORT Medicare fraud, errors, and abuse.

Dear Alicia,

More than 11,000 people in the U.S. turn 65 every day. One of the milestones of this birthday is the opportunity to join Medicare, the federal health care insurance program for older Americans and people with disabilities of any age. It was enacted by Congress in 1965 to give seniors the health care coverage they badly needed.

Alicia, you are entering the Initial Enrollment Period which says you can sign up for Medicare three months before the month of your 65th birthday, the month of your 65th birthday or three months after your 65th birthday. If you wait too long you may face penalties for **Part A** (hospitalization services) and **Part B** (doctor visits and laboratory tests) .

How to Sign Up and What is Covered

Some people who turn 65 continue working.

If you are one of those workers and your employer provides creditable coverage, you should still enroll in Part A (which is free) and possibly delay signing up for Part B. You will not be subject to penalties if you continue with credible coverage. A company must have more than 20

Part A—Hospitalization

Part B—Doctors and Lab Tests

Part C—Medicare Advantage

Part D—Prescription Drugs

employees for their coverage to be credible. If you are already collecting your Social Security retirement, Social Security will automatically enroll you in **Original Medicare (OM)** when you turn 65, otherwise go to [SocialSecurity.gov](https://www.SocialSecurity.gov) to enroll.

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Once you have enrolled in **OM** you will receive a red, white and blue **OM** card which notes when **Part A** and **Part B** are effective.

OM, on average, pays 80% of a Medicare beneficiary's bill. You have the option to purchase a Medicare supplemental policy to help cover the other 20%. An alternative to **OM** is to enroll in a private Medicare insurance plan known as a **Medicare Advantage Plan (MAP)**.

Under **OM** you will be enrolled in Medicare **Part A** and Medicare **Part B**. You will also need to purchase a separate **Part D** (prescription drug) plan. A **MAP** is **Part A, B and D** all rolled into one and is called **Part C**. A **MAP** generally must provide the same or better benefits as **OM**. A tool that can help you contrast and compare all Medicare plans in your area is available at www.Medicare.gov. Click on 'Plan Finder', enter your zip code and look at the options that are available.

Options to Consider and Costs

Under **OM** you do not need referrals for specialists, but in a **MAP** you typically do. You can visit doctors anywhere in the U.S. in **OM** whereas in a **MAP** you can only visit doctors in your plan's service area. **OM** does not

cover vision, hearing, or dental services. A **MAP** may cover these services.

Everyone on Medicare (**OM** or **MAP**) must pay a **Part B** premium. If you have a limited income, you may qualify for a government program that pays your premium and possibly even copays. Most beneficiaries **Part B** premium in 2024 is \$174.70. The average cost for a **Part D** premium is \$32.24.

If you worked 10 years or paid 40 quarters into Social Security, you will not have a premium for your Medicare **Part A** coverage. If you worked fewer years or had fewer quarters you will pay a monthly premium.

Medicare is complex and often confusing, so you may well need assistance to walk you through your options. The **State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP)** which is a part of **New Mexico Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC)** provides unbiased Medicare counseling and assistance. Call the **ADRC** at **1-800-432-2080** and ask to speak to a **SHIP** Counselor to help you. You can also chat with a counselor at www.nmaging.state.nm.us.

Stan

New Mexico SHIP SMP Counselor

SHIP & SMP Program Volunteering: Learn more about Medicare and ways to better serve the public by contacting us about available SHIP SMP volunteer opportunities at 1-800-432-2080. We provide training on Medicare content, and can work with your schedule. We can serve more people together!



SHIP

State Health Insurance
Assistance Program



SMP

Senior Medicare Patrol

Preventing Medicare Fraud