TURNING Age 65 Q&A

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

GROUP INSURANCE COMMISSION

www.mass.gov/gic

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Group Insurance Commission
Your Benefits Connection

September 2008

! Helpful Reminders

When you (the insured) retire and are age 65 or older:

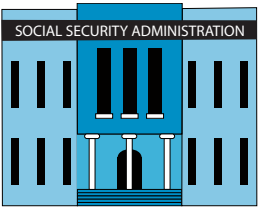
- If you and/or your spouse are eligible for Part A for free, state law requires that you and/or your spouse must enroll in Medicare Part A and Part B to be covered by the GIC.

- You must join a Medicare plan sponsored by the GIC to continue health coverage. These plans provide comprehensive coverage for some services that Medicare does not cover. If you and your spouse are Medicare eligible, you must enroll in the *same* GIC supplemental Medicare plan.

- You MUST continue to pay your Medicare Part B premium. Failure to pay this premium will result in the loss of your GIC coverage. *See page 10 for details.*

Other Reminders

- Call or visit your local Social Security office for more information about Medicare benefits.



- HMO Medicare plans require you to live in their service area. *See your Benefit Decision Guide* for the service area of your plan, which is available on our website.

- You may change GIC Medicare health plans only during annual enrollment, unless you move out of your plan's service area. Note: Even if your doctor or hospital drops out of your Medicare HMO, you must stay in the HMO until the next annual enrollment.

- Benefits and rates of Fallon Senior Plan and Tufts Health Plan Medicare Preferred are subject to federal approval and may change each January. These plans automatically include Medicare Part D prescription drug benefits. Contact the plans for additional details.

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Frequently Asked Questions

Q) What is Medicare?

A) Medicare is a Federal health insurance program for retirees age 65 or older and certain disabled people. Medicare Part A covers inpatient hospital care, some skilled nursing facility care and hospice care. Medicare Part B covers physician care, diagnostic x-rays and lab tests, and durable medical equipment. Medicare Part D is a federal prescription drug program.

Q) I'm turning age 65; what do I need to do? Should I enroll in Medicare Part A and/or Part B if I am eligible?

A) If you are age 65 or over, call or visit your local Social Security Office for confirmation of your Social Security and Medicare eligibility. If you are eligible and **if you are retired**, you must enroll in Medicare Part A and Part B to continue coverage with the GIC. See the *Retiree/Survivor Benefit Decision Guide*, available on the GIC's website, for your health plan options.

If you are eligible but you **continue working** for the state or a participating municipality after age 65 DO NOT enroll in Medicare Part B until you (the insured) retire.

The spouse covered by an active employee who is 65 or over should NOT sign up for Medicare Part B until the insured retires. Due to federal law, different rules apply for same sex spouses. *See page 12 for details.*

Most enrollees should not sign up for Medicare Part D. *See page 17 for more information.*

Q) I'm retired, but not age 65. My spouse is turning age 65; what should my spouse do?

A) Your spouse should call or visit your local Social Security Office for confirmation of Social Security and Medicare eligibility. If eligible, he/she must enroll in Medicare Part A and Part B to continue coverage with the GIC through a GIC Medicare supplemental plan. See the under/over age 65 section of the *Benefit Decision Guide,* available on our website, for your health plan combination options.

Q) If I am retired and under age 65 and my spouse or I am disabled, how do I find out whether or not I am eligible for Medicare Part A and Part B benefits?

A) If you or your spouse is disabled, contact Social Security about Medicare-eligibility. If eligible, contact the GIC for your health plan options.

Q) I have been a state employee for my entire career and have never contributed to Social Security. Why do I need to know about Medicare?

A) You may still be eligible for Medicare benefits. For example, if you are married, you may be eligible for Medicare through your spouse. When you turn age 65, visit your local Social Security office for eligibility information. If you are not eligible for Medicare, the GIC will require proof from the Social Security Administration that you are not eligible and you will remain in a GIC non-Medicare health plan.

Q) What is the cost of Medicare Part B?

A) The premium is set by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). Contact them or your local Social Security office for the current premium cost.

Q) How do I pay for Medicare Part B?

A) In most cases, the federal government will deduct the Medicare Part B premium from your monthly Social Security check. If you or your spouse are not eligible for a Social Security check, the federal government will bill you for the Medicare Part B premium.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Group Insurance Commission
Your Benefits Connection

When to enroll in Medicare if you are age 65 or older

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Group Insurance Commission Guidelines

Status	Employer	Health Plan	Sign up for free Part A	Sign Up for Part B	When to enroll in Part A and Part B	Part B penalty for late enrollment
Active, age 65 or older. Health coverage through the GIC	state-muni	GIC	Yes	No	Retirement (3 months before or 3 months after)	None, if you follow this schedule
Active, any age with dependent spouse over age 65. Health coverage through the GIC	state-muni	GIC	Yes	No*	Retirement (3 months before or 3 months after)	None, if you follow this schedule
Retired, no other job. Health coverage through the GIC	None	GIC	Yes	Yes	Retirement (at retirement or 3 months before or after 65th birthday)	None, if you follow this schedule

Retired from state/muni. Working elsewhere. Health coverage through non-GIC plan	non-state/muni	non-GIC plan	Yes	No	Retirement from private industry (3 months before or 3 months after)	None, if you follow this schedule
Retired from state/muni. Working elsewhere Health coverage through the GIC	non-state/muni	GIC	Yes	Yes	3 months before or after 65th birthday	None, if you follow this schedule
Retired, spouse works elsewhere and has family coverage. Retiree has no health coverage through the GIC	state-muni retiree	non-GIC plan	Yes	No	As soon as spouse retires from non-state/muni job	None, if you follow this schedule

The GIC will contact retirees regarding their Medicare eligibility a month before the retiree or his/her spouse turns age 65 or at retirement. *There are some special Medicare programs for people who are not yet 65, but who have kidney disease or some other disability. Contact your local Social Security Office, or their national customer service office at 1-800-722-1213 for all Medicare eligibility questions. *Due to federal laws, the same sex spouse covered by an active employee should sign up for Medicare Part A and Part B when he or she (the spouse) reaches age 65.*

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Q) When must I enroll in Medicare Part A and Part B?

A) When you or your spouse turns 65, and if you (the insured) are retired, you must enroll in Medicare Part A and Part B. If you (the insured) continue working for the state or municipality after age 65, you and/or your spouse must enroll in Medicare Part A. (Different rules apply to same sex spouses; *see page 12 for details.*) When you retire, you and/or your spouse must enroll in Medicare Part B and join a Medicare plan sponsored by the GIC.

If you do not enroll in Medicare Part B within the required time, you will be required to pay federal government penalties. Also, you will be ineligible for health coverage through the GIC if you do not enroll in Part B within the required time.

Q) What are the consequences if I cancel or do not pay Medicare Part B?

A) If you cancel or do not pay Medicare Part B, the GIC is required to terminate your GIC health coverage. This would mean that you would only have Medicare Part A coverage for inpatient hospital care. You would no longer have coverage for:

- Physician office visits
- Prescription drugs
- Outpatient mental health/substance abuse care
- Outpatient surgery
- X-rays and diagnostic tests
- Hearing aids

Q) Should I choose only Medicare for health care coverage?

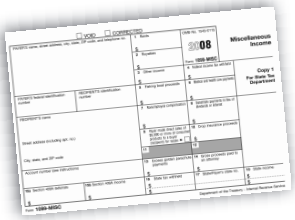
A) "Medicare only" coverage is not recommended as it has coverage limitations. To ensure comprehensive coverage, Medicare retirees should enroll in a Medicare health plan sponsored by the GIC as a supplement to their Medicare coverage.

Q) What documents must I provide to the GIC when I am retired and age 65 or over?

A) If you and/or your spouse are on Medicare, we will need the following documentation:

- Photocopy of your Medicare Card (include a copy of spouse's card if applicable)

- Photocopy of your latest 1099 or a letter from Social Security stating how your monthly Part B premium is paid (e.g., you are being directly billed by Social Security or it is being deducted from your Social Security check). Include this same documentation for your spouse, if applicable.



If you and/or your spouse are over age 65 and **not eligible** for Medicare we will need the following documentation:

- Letter from Social Security stating that you or your spouse is not eligible for Medicare Part A for free.

Q) If I enroll in a GIC Medicare supplemental plan, what happens to my spouse's coverage?

A) Your spouse will continue to be covered under your existing non-Medicare plan if he/she is under age 65 until he or she becomes eligible for Medicare. You and your spouse must join the same health plan. See the *Retiree/Survivor Benefit Decision Guide,* available on our website, for under and over age 65 health plan combination options. If your spouse is over age 65, he/she must enroll in the same Medicare supplemental plan that you have joined.

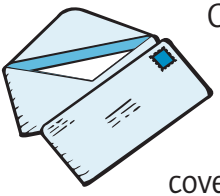
Q) I have a same sex spouse who has coverage through the GIC. My same sex spouse is turning age 65. What does he/she need to do?

A) Regardless of whether you (the insured) are retired, to avoid any federal government late enrollment penalties, your same sex spouse should enroll in Medicare Part A and Part B if he or she is eligible for Medicare Part A for free. Your same sex spouse will continue to be covered under your non-Medicare health plan until you (the insured) retire.

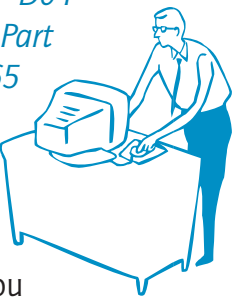
Keep in mind that the same sex spouse is subject to federal imputed income taxes. See our website for more information.

Q) At age 65 my spouse or I were not eligible for Medicare Part A for free. I or my spouse has subsequently become eligible for Medicare Part A. What do we need to do?

A) You or your spouse must notify the GIC in writing when you become eligible for Medicare Part A. The GIC will notify you of your coverage options. Failure to do this may result in loss of GIC coverage.



Q) I am retired with GIC health insurance, but am working elsewhere. Do I need to enroll in Medicare Part A and Part B if I am age 65 or over and eligible?



A) Yes. Because you have health insurance through the GIC as a retiree, you will be enrolling in a GIC supplemental Medicare plan to continue coverage. *See page 11 for required documentation.*

*Q) I am an **active** state employee age 65 or over; which health plan card should I present to a doctor's office or hospital?*

A) When visiting a hospital or doctor, present your GIC health plan card (**not your Medicare card**) to ensure that your GIC health plan is charged for the visit. If you are still working and are age 65 or over, your GIC health plan is your primary health insurance provider; Medicare (if you have it) is secondary. You may need to explain this to your provider if he/she asks for your Medicare card.

Q) How do I find out about Medicare Plan options?

A) When you retire at age 65 or over or if you are retired and turn age 65, the GIC will contact you the month before you turn age 65 or upon retirement about your health plan options. The GIC's *Benefit Decision Guide,* available on our website, provides an overview of your Medicare health plan choices.

Q) When can I change GIC Medicare plans?

A) You may change your GIC Medicare plan during annual enrollment or if you move out of a GIC HMO Medicare plan's service area.

Q) How do I change Medicare plans during annual enrollment or if I move out of my Medicare HMO plan's service area?

A) Write to the GIC or attend a GIC annual enrollment health fair and the GIC will process your change. If you are enrolling in a Medicare HMO plan, the plan will send you an application to complete and return. If you are currently in a Medicare Advantage HMO plan (Fallon Senior Plan or Tufts Medicare Preferred), you must also dis-enroll from your plan by notifying the current carrier in writing. The plan will notify you and the GIC of the effective date of the dis-enrollment.

Q) How do I calculate my monthly Medicare health premium rates?

A) Using the rate section of our website, add the following:

- For an insured and spouse on Medicare – find the premium for the Medicare plan in which you are enrolling and double it for your monthly rate.

- For a Retiree and Spouse Coverage if Under and Over Age 65 – find the premium for the Medicare Plan in which the Medicare retiree or spouse will be enrolling.

  Find the individual coverage premium for the Non-Medicare Plan in which the Non-Medicare retiree or spouse will be enrolling.
  Add the two premiums together; this is what you will pay monthly.

For other coverage combinations, contact the GIC.

Q) I am an active employee with GIC health coverage who is age 65 or over. Should I enroll in Medicare Part D?

A) No.

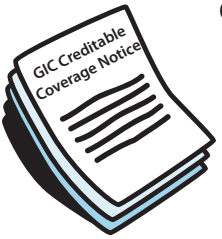
Q) I am a retiree. Should I enroll in Medicare Part D?

A) For most GIC Medicare enrollees, the drug coverage you currently have through your GIC health plan is a better value than the Medicare drug plans being offered. Therefore, you should not enroll in a Medicare drug plan. (If you are a member of one of the GIC's Medicare Advantage plans – Fallon Senior Plan and Tufts Medicare Preferred – your plan automatically includes Medicare Part D coverage and you may **not** join an additional Part D plan.)

If you have limited income and assets, the Social Security Administration offers help paying for Medicare prescription drug coverage and this may be the one case where signing up for a Medicare Part D plan may work for you. Contact the Social Security Administration for details.

Q) How do I avoid paying a penalty for late enrollment in Medicare Part D?

A) If you should later enroll in a Medicare drug plan because of changed circumstances, show the GIC's *Creditable Coverage Notice* to the Social Security Administration to avoid paying a penalty. This notice is in your health plan handbook and is also on the GIC's website.



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