

**Office of Medicaid
BOARD OF HEARINGS**

Appellant Name and Address:



Appeal Decision:	Denied	Appeal Number:	2517538
Decision Date:	1/5/2026	Hearing Date:	12/16/2025
Hearing Officer:	Mariah Burns		

Appearance for Appellant:
Pro se

Appearance for MassHealth:
Lashaun Kelley, Quincy MassHealth Enrollment
Center



*The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Office of Medicaid
Board of Hearings
100 Hancock Street, Quincy, Massachusetts 02171*

APPEAL DECISION

Appeal Decision:	Denied	Issue:	Community Eligibility; Under 65; Income
Decision Date:	1/5/2026	Hearing Date:	12/16/2025
MassHealth's Rep.:	Lashaun Kelley	Appellant's Rep.:	Pro se
Hearing Location:	Telephone (Quincy)	Aid Pending:	No

Authority

This hearing was conducted pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 118E, Chapter 30A, and the rules and regulations promulgated thereunder.

Jurisdiction

Through a notice dated October 21, 2025, MassHealth downgraded the appellant's benefits from MassHealth CarePlus to the Health Safety Net because MassHealth determined that the appellant's income is too high to qualify. *See* 130 CMR 505.008 and Exhibit 1. The appellant filed this appeal in a timely manner on November 26, 2025. *See* 130 CMR 610.015(B) and Exhibit 2. Denial of assistance is valid grounds for appeal. *See* 130 CMR 610.032.

Action Taken by MassHealth

MassHealth downgraded the appellant's MassHealth benefits from CarePlus to the Health Safety Net.

Issue

The appeal issue is whether MassHealth correctly calculated the appellant's income in determining that he is not eligible for MassHealth benefits beyond the Health Safety Net.

Summary of Evidence

The appellant is an adult under the age of 65 who resides in a household of one¹. MassHealth was represented by a worker from the Tewksbury MassHealth Enrollment Center. All parties appeared at the hearing by telephone. The following is a summary of the evidence and testimony provided:

The MassHealth representative testified that prior to the issuance of the appealed denial notice, MassHealth sent a request for information to verify the appellant's income. The appellant reported, and MassHealth verified, that the appellant receives approximately \$1,051.00 in weekly unemployment benefits, before deductions, which equals \$4,553.98 per month. This gross monthly income is about 292.02% of the federal poverty level, taking the 5% disregard into account, and the appellant was thus deemed to be over the required income limit of 133% of the federal poverty level. MassHealth sent a notice to that effect on October 21, 2025, which downgraded the appellant's benefits from MassHealth CarePlus to the Health Safety Net.

The appellant agreed with the calculation of his income. He reported that he is not pregnant, does not have breast or cervical cancer or HIV, and has not been deemed disabled by MassHealth or the Social Security Administration. He explained that he has expenses that are not covered by his unemployment benefits and he has diabetes with ongoing complications. He stated that he expects his unemployment benefits to expire within four weeks of the date of hearing.

Findings of Fact

Based on a preponderance of the evidence, I find the following:

1. The appellant is an adult under the age of 65 who resides in a household of one. Testimony, Exhibit 4.
2. On or about October 21, 2025, MassHealth verified that the appellant is over the income limit to qualify for MassHealth benefits and issued a notice to that effect on that date, downgrading his benefits from MassHealth CarePlus to the Health Safety Net. Exhibit 1, Testimony.
3. The appellant filed a timely request for fair hearing on November 26, 2025. Exhibit 2.
4. The appellant receives roughly \$4,553.98 in gross monthly unemployment benefits. Testimony, Exhibit 5.

¹ Although the appellant reports living with his partner and her minor child, he does not claim either of them on his federal taxes. Testimony.

5. The appellant does not have HIV or breast or cervical cancer, is not pregnant, and has not been deemed disabled by the Social Security Administration nor by MassHealth. Testimony.

Analysis and Conclusions of Law

MassHealth regulations at 130 CMR 505.000 *et seq.* explain the categorical requirements and financial standards that must be met to qualify for a particular MassHealth coverage type. The rules of financial responsibility and calculation of financial eligibility for individuals who are under age 65 are detailed in 130 CMR 506.000: *Health Care Reform: MassHealth: Financial Requirements*. The MassHealth coverage types are:

- (1) *MassHealth Standard* - for pregnant women, children, parents and caretaker relatives, young adults, disabled individuals, certain persons who are HIV positive, individuals with breast or cervical cancer, independent foster care adolescents, Department of Mental Health (DMH) members, and medically frail as such term is defined in 130 CMR 505.008(F);
- (2) *MassHealth CommonHealth* - for disabled adults, disabled young adults, and disabled children who are not eligible for MassHealth Standard;
- (3) *MassHealth CarePlus* - for adults 21 through 64 years of age who are not eligible for MassHealth Standard;
- (4) *Family Assistance* - for children, young adults, certain noncitizens, and persons who are HIV positive who are not eligible for MassHealth Standard, CommonHealth, or CarePlus;
- (5) *Limited* - for certain lawfully present immigrants as described in 130 CMR 504.003(A), nonqualified PRUCOLs, and other noncitizens as described in 130 CMR 504.003: *Immigrants*; and
- (6) *MassHealth Medicare Savings Programs (MSP, also called Senior Buy-In and Buy-In)* - for certain Medicare beneficiaries.

130 CMR 505.001(A) (emphasis added).

To establish eligibility for MassHealth benefits, applicants must meet both the categorical and financial requirements. In this case, the appellant is over the age of 21 but under 65, is not the legal caretaker of a minor child, and did not report any of the listed health conditions. Thus, as he does not belong to a category to qualify for MassHealth Standard, he meets the categorical requirements for MassHealth CarePlus. The question then remains as to whether he meets the income requirements to qualify.

An individual between the ages of 21 and 64 who does not qualify for MassHealth Standard is eligible for MassHealth CarePlus if “the modified adjusted gross income of the MassHealth MAGI household is less than or equal to 133% of the federal poverty level.” 130 CMR 505.008(A)(2). To

determine financial eligibility pursuant to 130 CMR 506.007, MassHealth must construct a household as described, in relevant part, in 130 CMR 506.002(B) for each individual person applying for or renewing coverage:

- (1) Taxpayers Not Claimed as a Tax Dependent on Their Federal Income Taxes. For an individual who expects to file a tax return for the taxable year in which the initial determination or renewal of eligibility is being made and who is not claimed as a tax dependent by another taxpayer, the household consists of
- (a) the taxpayer; including their spouse, if the taxpayers are married and filing jointly regardless of whether they are living together;
 - (b) the taxpayer's spouse, if living with them regardless of filing status;
 - (c) all persons the taxpayer expects to claim as tax dependents; and
 - (d) if any individual described in 130 CMR 506.002(B)(1)(a) through (c) is pregnant, the number of expected children.

Here, the appellant does not dispute that he resides in a household of one. Based on 2025 MassHealth Income Standards and Federal Poverty Guidelines, 133% of the federal poverty level equates to a monthly income of \$1,735.00 or \$20,820.00 for the year. *See chart at <https://www.mass.gov/doc/2025-masshealth-income-standards-and-federal-poverty-guidelines-0/download>.*

MassHealth determines an applicant's modified adjusted gross income (MAGI) by taking the countable income, which includes earned income as described in 130 CMR 506.003(A) and unearned income described in 130 CMR 506.003(B), less deductions described in 130 CMR 506.003(D). Specifically, 130 CMR 506.007 provides how the MAGI is calculated:

- (A)(2) ...Once the individual's household is established, financial eligibility is determined by using the total of all countable monthly income for each person in that individual's MassHealth MAGI or Disabled Adult household. Income of all the household members forms the basis for establishing an individual's eligibility.
- (a) A household's countable income is the sum of the MAGI-based income of every individual included in the individual's household with the exception of children and tax dependents who are not expected to be required to file a return as described in 42 CFR 435.603 and 130 CMR 506.004(M).
 - (b) Countable income includes earned income described in 130 CMR 506.003(A) and unearned income described in 130 CMR 506.003(B) less deductions described in 130 CMR 506.003(D).
 - (c) In determining monthly income, the MassHealth agency multiplies average weekly income by 4.333.

(3) Five percentage points of the current federal poverty level (FPL) is subtracted from the applicable household total countable income to determine eligibility of the individual under the coverage type with the highest income standard.

....

(C) The monthly federal-poverty-level income standards are determined according to annual standards published in the Federal Register using the following formula. The MassHealth agency adjusts these standards annually.

- (1) Multiply the annual 100% figure posted in the Federal Register by the applicable federal poverty level income standard.
- (2) Round these annual figures up to the nearest hundredth.
- (3) Divide by 12 to arrive at the monthly income standards.

Per 130 CMR 506.003(B), countable income includes, in relevant part, “the total amount of taxable income that does not directly result from the individual's own labor after allowable deductions on the U.S Individual Tax Return...[including, but] not limited to, social security benefits, railroad retirement benefits, pensions, annuities, certain trusts, interest and dividend income, state or local tax refund for a tax you deducted in the previous year, and gross gambling income.”

In this case, the appellant agrees that he currently receives \$4,553.98 in gross monthly unemployment benefits. That amount exceeds 133% of the federal poverty level based on the income standards for 2025, even less the 5% federal poverty level deduction, and the appellant has not been found to have a health condition that would change his applicable income standard. The appellant is, therefore, not financially eligible for MassHealth benefits. I find that MassHealth did not err in issuing the October 21, 2025, notice downgrading the appellant’s MassHealth benefits from CarePlus to the Health Safety Net².

For the foregoing reasons, the appeal is denied.

The appellant can direct any questions about Health Connector plans to 1-877-MA-ENROLL (1-877-623-6765), or inquiries concerning Health Safety Net to 877-910-2100.

² The appellant may notify MassHealth when his unemployment benefits run out, at which point MassHealth may issue a new, appealable eligibility determination.

Order for MassHealth

None.

Notification of Your Right to Appeal to Court

If you disagree with this decision, you have the right to appeal to court in accordance with Chapter 30A of the Massachusetts General Laws. To appeal, you must file a complaint with the Superior Court for the county where you reside, or Suffolk County Superior Court, within 30 days of your receipt of this decision.

Mariah Burns
Hearing Officer
Board of Hearings

MassHealth Representative: Quincy MEC, Attn: Cassandra Moura, Appeals Coordinator