

Medicaid Buy-In for Working Persons with Disabilities (MBI-WPD)

Who is Covered?

- *Basic Coverage Group:* Workers who are at least 16 but under age 65, who meet the SSI definition of disability.
- *Medical Improvement Group:* Workers who received coverage in the Basic Coverage Group and, on a continuing disability review, lost eligibility for that group as a direct and specific result of medical improvement but retain a severe medical impairment.

Basic Coverage Group: Who Is Eligible?

Individuals who

- Have certification of disability as defined by the Social Security Administration.
- Are at least 16 but not yet 65.
- Are engaged in paid work (includes part-time and full-time work).
- Have a gross income in 2026 that may be as high as \$79,885 for an individual, \$108,285 for a disabled couple if the only income is earned income.
- Have countable resources, effective January 1, 2026, that do not exceed \$33,038 for an individual, \$44,796 for a disabled couple.

Note: There is no substantial gainful activity rule (i.e., an individual can earn more than \$1,690 per month in 2026, or \$2,830 if blind, and still be eligible for the MBI-WPD).

Income Limits

- Individuals with countable income up to 250% of federal poverty levels (FPL) (i.e., monthly gross wages, minus earned income deductions, as high as \$3,325 in a household of 1 for the year 2026).
- If monthly countable income is \$1,995 or less in 2026 (up to 150% of FPL), no premiums will be due.
- Individuals with income above 250% of FPL may not purchase Medicaid coverage.

Determining Countable Income

- Will follow the same SSI budgeting rules as used in the regular Medicaid spend down program.
- Typical deductions from income: first \$20 of unearned income excluded; first \$65 of earnings (or \$85 if no unearned income) plus 50% of remaining earned income excluded; impairment related work expenses are excluded from earned income; blind work expenses are excluded from earned income; money set aside in an approved Plan to Achieve Self Support (PASS) can be excluded from unearned or earned income.
- Example: An individual has \$3,885 in gross monthly wages and no other income. This individual will have \$1,900 in countable monthly income ($\$3,885 - 20 - 65 = 3,800 - 1,900 = \$1,900$). Since this is less than 250% of the FPL for 2026 (i.e., less than \$3,325), this individual will be eligible for the MBI-WPD.

Asset Limits

- Effective January 1, 2026, \$33,038 is allowed in countable resources for an eligible individual and \$44,797 for an eligible couple.
- Countable resources include bank accounts, savings bonds, stocks, and other liquid assets.
- Exempt resources include: a residential house, a vehicle, certain life insurance policies, a limited burial reserve, and several other items.
- Retirement funds are exempt and not counted against resource limits. Retirement funds include but are not limited to pensions, Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs), 401(k) plans, and 403(b) plans.
- ABLE account savings, in any amount up to NYABLE limit of \$520,000, are exempt.

Premiums

- No premium is owed if countable income is below 150 percent of the federal poverty level.
- If income is between 150 and 250 percent of the federal poverty level, premium will be \$25 per month for an eligible individual, \$50 per month for an eligible couple.
- As this is written, the State Department of Health still has no system in place to collect premiums.

Applying for the Medicaid Buy-In Program

- An application for the MBI-WPD must be made at the Local Department of Social Services or the Human Resources Agency in New York City.

Medical Improvement Group: Who Is Eligible?

Individuals who are

- Members of the Basic Coverage Group, who lose eligibility for the Basic Coverage Group due to medical improvement but retain a severe medical impairment, and
- Are engaged in paid work, working 40 hours or more per month and earning at least the federal minimum wage.

Grace Periods or What If I Lose My Job?

- *Change in Medical Condition:* A grace period of up to six months will be allowed if, for medical reasons, the Medicaid Buy-In recipient is unable to continue working. Medical verification will be required.
- *Job Loss (through no fault of recipient):* A grace period of up to six months will be allowed if, through no fault of the recipient, a job loss occurs (layoff, etc.). Verification will be required that the recipient is reasonably expected to return to work as it is a temporary layoff, or that the recipient is actively seeking new employment.

Authority

The State Department of Health has issued several policy documents related to the Medicaid Buy-In for Working People with Disabilities Program. This includes two key Administrative Directives (ADMs) to govern case processing in the program, [03 OMM/ADM 04 \(June 9, 2003\)](#) and [04 OMM/ADM 05 \(July 20, 2004\)](#).

Potential Medicaid Buy-In Program Changes in 2026

Through a proposed Medicaid waiver, if approved by the federal Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services, New York will establish a demonstration project that would allow persons to qualify for the MBI-WPD after age 65, with higher income limits, higher resource limits, and without counting the income of the applicant's spouse.

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