



Health Care Assistance Programs

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Fast facts

- ▲ Hennepin had approximately 158,000 residents enrolled in Medical Assistance in 2007.
- ▲ Hennepin had approximately 26,400 enrollees in General Assistance Medical Care in 2007.
- ▲ Hennepin had approximately 22,000 residents enrolled in MinnesotaCare in 2007.

What are health care assistance programs?

The State of Minnesota offers three publicly funded health care assistance programs that pay some or all of enrollees' medical bills, including visits to a doctor, emergency room care, prescription drugs, dental services, medical equipment and supplies, and prosthetics. In 2007, the three programs -- Medical Assistance (MA), General Assistance Medical Care (GAMC) and MinnesotaCare -- had approximately 206,400 enrollees in Hennepin County.

These health care assistance programs are vital in preventing future health care costs. The programs provide a safety net and encourage health by focusing on prevention, not just emergency care. The majority of people covered by these programs are families and children. The second largest group includes seniors and persons with disabilities. The smallest group is single adults.

Medical Assistance (MA)

Sometimes called Medicaid, Medical Assistance is the largest of the three health care programs. It provides assistance for low-income senior citizens, children and families, and persons with disabilities.

MA uses both state and federal dollars. Hennepin administers MA for its residents with oversight from the Minnesota Department of Human Services and the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Hennepin had approximately 158,000 MA recipients in 2007.

Program eligibility is determined by a variety of factors, including income, family size, health status, and assets such as bank accounts. Families, children and pregnant women comprise the largest MA group; however, most MA dollars are spent on the elderly or disabled. Enrollees may have to pay co-pays for services such as prescriptions and eyeglasses.

General Assistance Medical Care (GAMC)

GAMC provides medical care for low-income Hennepin residents who do not qualify for MA or other state and federal programs. Typically, a GAMC client is age 21 to 64 and has no dependent children.

GAMC is entirely state funded.

Hennepin had approximately 26,400 enrollees in GAMC in 2007. Program eligibility is determined by a variety of factors, including gross income, assets and family size.

MinnesotaCare

MinnesotaCare is the state's health insurance program for people who don't have access to affordable health care. Most of the program's enrollees are working yet earning too much to qualify for MA but not enough to pay for private insurance, and health insurance is not available through their employer. In 2007, Hennepin had approximately 22,000 residents enrolled in MinnesotaCare.

Most of the enrollees pay premiums for MinnesotaCare on a sliding fee scale and have co-pays or deductibles for services such as prescriptions, inpatient care and eyeglasses. The premiums, coupled with a 1.5 percent tax on hospitals and health care providers, help pay for the program. The funds are gathered into the state-administered Health Care Access Fund.

Program eligibility is determined by income and other factors, such as not having health insurance in the last four months.