

What is an Elder Benefit Specialist?

An elder benefit specialist is a person trained to help older persons who are having a problem with their private or government benefits.

County and tribal benefit specialists are often called “red tape cutters” because they are experts at helping older persons with the extensive and complicated paperwork that is often required in benefit programs. They help older persons figure out what benefits they are entitled to and tell them what they must do to receive them.

Elder benefit specialists receive ongoing training and are monitored by attorneys knowledgeable in elder law. The attorneys are also available to assist older persons in need of legal representation on benefit matters.

Who Should Seek Help from an Elder Benefit Specialist?

- Older persons who just want to know more about any private or public benefit.
- Older persons who need help in organizing the paperwork to apply for benefits.
- Older persons who have been denied a benefit that they think they are entitled to receive.

What Elder Benefit Specialists Can Do

- Provide accurate and current information on your benefits.
- Suggest alternative actions to secure benefits or appeal denials of benefits.
- Advocate on your behalf with other parties.
- Explain what legal action or other possible solution is required.
- Refer you to an appropriate attorney when necessary.

Benefit specialists can help you with a variety of programs and issues, including:

Health Insurance and Access

- Medical Assistance
- Medicare A, B, C, and D
- SeniorCare
- BadgerCare+ Core eligibility and adverse decisions (denial or reduction in benefits)

- Extra Help with Prescription Drug Costs
- Medicare Supplement Insurance Coverage Issues
- Other Health Insurance Coverage Issues
- Medical Debt Remediation
- Long-Term Care Insurance Coverage Issues

Income Support

- Food Share
- Social Security
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and State Supplement
- SSI Disability
- SSI Exceptional Expense Supplement
- Social Security/SSI Overpayment Issues
- Railroad Retirements Benefits
- Lifeline / LinkUp

Community-Based Services

- Community Options Program (COP)
- Home and Community Based Medicaid Waiver Programs
 - Community Options Program, Waiver (COP-W)
 - Family Care
 - Family Care Partnership
 - Include, Respect, I Self-Direct (IRIS)

Housing / Utilities

- Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program (WHEAP)
- Wisconsin's Weatherization Assistance Program (disputes and appeals)
- Subsidized Housing Access/Tenant Rights
- Utility Shutoffs/Unpaid Utility Bills
- Housing Repair/Improvement Loans and Grants
- Homestead Tax Credit Appeals (Not applications)
- Landlord/Tenant/Evictions/Security Deposit Return
- Property Tax Deferral Program

Consumer

- Debt Collection Practices

Other

- Benefit Checkup

Who is Eligible for Elder Benefit Specialist Services?

Anyone 60 years of age or older who is having a problem in securing a public or private benefit is eligible for the Elder Benefit Specialist Program.

What Does the Elder Benefit Specialist Service Cost?

The program is supported with funds from the State of Wisconsin and the federal Older Americans Act. There is no charge for the service, but persons assisted by the program are encouraged to make a donation towards the cost. All donated funds will be used to expand the program. Services will not be refused or limited in any way if a contribution is not made.

Who Provides Elder Benefit Specialist Services?

Services are either provided directly, by county and tribal Aging Units, or are contracted to another agency, such as Aging and Disability Resource Centers. The area agencies on aging contract for training and support of the benefit specialists by attorneys. The Bureau of Aging and Disability Resources in the Wisconsin Department of Health Services coordinates the program statewide.

For more information, contact the county or tribal benefit specialist nearest you. Ask specifically for the benefit specialist when calling. To receive the best service, it is advisable to schedule an appointment in advance.

Contact your benefit specialist at:



STATE OF WISCONSIN
DEPT OF HEALTH SERVICES
Division of Long Term Care
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dhs.wisconsin.gov

ELDER BENEFIT SPECIALIST: THE RED TAPE CUTTERS

STATE OF WISCONSIN
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES
Division of Long Term Care
Bureau of Aging and Disability Resources