

ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTIVE

TRANSMITTAL: 96 ADM-14

TO: Commissioners of
Social Services

DIVISION: Health & Long
Term Care

DATE: July 26, 1996

SUBJECT: Spousal Impoverishment: Allowance Increases for 1996

**SUGGESTED
DISTRIBUTION:**

Medical Assistance Staff
Fair Hearing Staff
Legal Staff
QA&A Staff
Staff Development Coordinators

**CONTACT
PERSON:**

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ATTACHMENTS:

None

FILING REFERENCES

Previous ADMs/INFs	Releases Cancelled	Dept. Regs.	Soc. Serv. Law & Other Legal Ref.	Manual Ref.	Misc. Ref.
96 ADM-11	94 ADM-7	360-4.3(f)	SSA 1924	MARG pp.	GIS 95MA052
95 ADM-12	93 ADM-17	360-4.9	SSL 366-c	200-209.1,	GIS 95MA048
91 ADM-33	92 ADM-18	360-4.10		213, 331-	GIS 95MA047
91 ADM-27	91 ADM-13			334.4	MBL Trans-
90 ADM-29	90 ADM-35				mittal 95-2
92 INF-14	90 INF-19				
89 ADM-47					

I. PURPOSE

This Administrative Directive (ADM) advises social services districts of the January, 1996 increases in the following amounts:

1. the maximum protected resource amount for a community spouse;
2. the community spouse's minimum monthly maintenance needs allowance; and
3. the family member allowance.

These amounts are used in determining the Medical Assistance (MA) eligibility of an institutionalized spouse.

II. BACKGROUND

A. Maximum Community Spouse Resource Amount

Section 366-c of the Social Services Law (SSL) specifies the rules to be used in determining the MA eligibility of an institutionalized person with a spouse in the community. Section 366-c, as amended by Chapter 81 of the Laws of 1995, provides that community spouses must be allowed to retain resources equal to one-half of the couple's total countable resources (spousal share), but not less than \$74,820 nor more than the maximum community spouse resource amount permitted under federal law.

The maximum community spouse resource amount, which is increased each year by the same percentage as the annual increase in the Federal consumer price index, was \$74,820 in 1995. Effective January 1, 1996, the maximum community spouse resource amount is \$76,740.

B. Minimum Monthly Maintenance Needs Allowance

Section 366-c of the SSL provides that community spouses must be allowed to retain a specified amount of monthly income, referred to as the minimum monthly maintenance needs allowance (MMMNA). The MMMNA, which is increased each year by the same percentage as the annual increase in the Federal consumer price index, was \$1,871 in 1995. Effective January 1, 1996, the MMMNA is \$1,919.

C. Family Member Allowance

Section 366-c of the SSL provides that in determining the amount of an institutionalized spouse's income to be applied toward the cost of care, a family member allowance must be deducted for each family member living with the community spouse. A family member allowance is established for a minor child, a dependent child, dependent parent, or dependent sibling of the institutionalized spouse or community spouse, who is residing with the community spouse and who has over 50 percent of his or her maintenance needs met by the community spouse and/or the institutionalized spouse.

The family member allowance equals one-third of the amount by which one-twelfth of 150 percent of the federal income official poverty line (poverty line) for a family of two exceeds the otherwise available monthly income of the family member. The maximum family member allowance (that is, where the family member's otherwise available income is zero) was \$418 at the end of 1995. As a result of a change in the poverty line, effective January 1, 1996, the maximum family member allowance is \$432.

III. PROGRAM IMPLICATIONS

A. **Maximum Community Spouse Resource Amount**

As advised in 96 ADM-11, the spousal share is an amount equal to one-half of the total value of the couple's countable resources as of the date of the first continuous period of institutionalization of the institutionalized spouse on or after September 30, 1989.

Effective January 1, 1996, the minimum community spouse resource amount is \$74,820 and the maximum community spouse resource amount is \$76,740. As a result, in cases where the spousal share is less than \$74,820, the community spouse will be permitted to retain up to \$74,820 of the couple's total countable resources. In cases where the spousal share exceeds \$74,820, the community spouse is allowed to retain resources in an amount equal to the spousal share but not to exceed \$76,740. In order for the spousal share to be more than \$74,820, the total countable resources of the couple would have to be more than \$149,640.

NOTE: When the first month of institutionalization is prior to the month for which MA coverage is sought, use of the spousal share figure will require social services districts to complete two assessments of a couple's resources. The first assessment will determine the total countable resources of the couple for purposes of establishing the spousal share. This assessment must be based on the resources of the couple as of the first month of institutionalization. The second assessment will determine the total countable resources of the couple for the month MA coverage is sought. The spousal share amount, as determined by the first assessment, is used in the second assessment to determine the community spouse resource allowance and the MA eligibility of the institutionalized spouse.

It is estimated that although the increase in the maximum community spouse resource amount will result in more spouses becoming eligible for MA coverage for institutional care and services, the required use of the spousal share figure will reduce the number of cases that are entitled to the maximum community spouse resource amount.

B. Minimum Monthly Maintenance Needs Allowance

Effective January 1, 1996, the MMMNA is \$1,919. Institutionalized spouses must be allowed, on a monthly basis, to transfer sufficient income to bring the community spouse's monthly income up to \$1,919. In addition, the increased MMMNA amount must be used in determining the amount of any contribution to be requested from the income of a community spouse or a spouse living apart from an SSI-related applicant/recipient (A/R). The increase in the MMMNA may result in more institutionalized spouses becoming eligible for MA coverage for institutional care and services.

It should be noted that SSL Section 366-c(8) continues to provide for a higher community spouse income allowance based on exceptional circumstances resulting in significant financial distress. As advised in 89 ADM-47, such expenses may be of a recurring nature or may represent one-time costs, and may include, but are not limited to: recurring or extraordinary non-covered medical expenses of the community spouse or family members; amounts to preserve, maintain, or make major repairs on the homestead; and amounts necessary to preserve an income-producing asset. An increase of the community spouse monthly income allowance must be established by a fair hearing or court order.

C. Family Member Allowance

Effective January 1, 1996, the family member allowance will be calculated by subtracting the amount of the family member's otherwise available income from \$1,295, dividing the result by three, and rounding up to the nearest dollar. The maximum family member allowance (where the family member's otherwise available income is zero) is:

$$\frac{\$1,295}{3} = \$432 \text{ (rounded up to the nearest dollar)}$$

As advised in 89 ADM-47, a family member allowance is first made up of the community spouse's income in excess of the MMMNA. If the community spouse's excess income is insufficient to provide the family member allowance, all or part of the allowance, as necessary, is subtracted from any available income of the institutionalized spouse.

A larger family member allowance will reduce the amount of an institutionalized spouse's or community spouse's income that is available to meet the cost of care. In addition, a larger family member allowance will reduce the amount of income which may be requested as a contribution from a spouse living apart from an SSI-related A/R.

IV. REQUIRED ACTION

A. Maximum Community Spouse Resource Amount

As instructed in GIS Message 95 MA047, dated December 5, 1995, for budgeting periods beginning January 1, 1996 and after, social services districts must use the minimum community spouse resource amount of \$74,820 and the maximum community spouse resource amount of \$76,740 to determine the amount of resources that a community spouse is allowed to retain. In applying these two figures to the community spouse resource allowance formula, the applicable allowance is to be determined by taking the greatest of the following amounts:

1. \$74,820;
2. the amount of the spousal share, but not to exceed \$76,740;
or
3. the amount established for support of the community spouse pursuant to a fair hearing or court order.

In order to determine whether a couple's spousal share is applicable in determining the community spouse's resource allowance, social services districts must first determine if the total countable resources of the couple were more than \$149,640 as of the month of the first continuous period of institutionalization of the institutionalized spouse. This information can be obtained at the face-to-face interview or questions can be included on a separate agency letter that accompanies the MA application/recertification form. The MA eligibility worker needs to be advised of any previous period of institutionalization and whether the couple had more than \$149,640 in countable resources. This information will determine whether the spousal share figure is to be a factor in determining the maximum community spouse resource allowance.

If an individual claims to have had resources in excess of \$149,640 in the first month of the first continuous period of institutionalization, documentation/verification of the couple's resources for the first month of institutionalization must be obtained. If the first month of institutionalization is within the transfer look-back period, most of the required information will be obtained through the regular resource review process. It is possible, however, that the first month of institutionalization may be outside of the transfer look-back period, in which case, additional resource information must be obtained.

In addition, if the first period of institutionalization is other than the current period of institutionalization and the institutionalized spouse or community spouse claims to have had resources in excess of \$149,640 at the time of the first institutionalization (of the institutionalized spouse), verification must be provided to document the previous institutionalization.

Note: If an institutionalized spouse or community spouse fails to provide documentation/verification of resources for the first month of institutionalization, the social services district shall use the State minimum spousal resource standard of \$74,820 to determine the community spouse resource allowance.

Social services districts should also note that although a couple's resources may be less than \$149,640 for the first month of institutionalization but greater than \$149,640 at the time of MA application, the determination of the spousal share must be based on the resources of the couple as of the first month of institutionalization.

Once documentation is received and the spousal share determined, the spousal share is compared to \$76,740. If the spousal share is less than or equal to \$76,740, the maximum community spouse resource allowance is the amount of the spousal share. If the amount of the spousal share exceeds \$76,740, the maximum community spouse resource allowance is capped at \$76,740. As instructed in 96 ADM-11, social services districts must use the new insert page to the "Institutionalized Spouse Budget Worksheet" (Attachment I to 96 ADM-11), when the amount of the spousal share or maximum community spouse resource amount is used as the community spouse's maximum community spouse resource allowance.

In determining the resources of an institutionalized spouse when the institutionalized spouse or community spouse does not claim to have resources in excess of \$149,640 as of the month of the first continuous period of institutionalization, the community spouse must be permitted to retain up to \$74,820 of the couple's total countable resources.

Note: When determining an institutionalized spouse's eligibility for any month beginning January 1, 1996 or after (even if the first month of institutionalization was prior to January 1, 1996), social services districts must use the minimum community spouse resource amount and the increased maximum community spouse resource amount as applicable.

B. Minimum Monthly Maintenance Needs Allowance

Effective January 1, 1996, social services districts must use the

increased MMMNA amount of \$1,919 in determining the Net Available Monthly Income (NAMI) of an institutionalized spouse or when completing an assessment. As advised in GIS message 95 MA047, all cases involving an institutionalized spouse active on or after January 1, 1996 must have eligibility recomputed based on the new figure of \$1,919. The budgeting procedures contained in 89 ADM-47 and 91 ADM-27 must be followed for computing the amount of the community spouse's monthly income allowance. Any increase in the amount of income available for a community spouse or decrease in an institutionalized spouse's NAMI is to be made effective January 1, 1996.

Social services districts must also use the new MMMNA amount to calculate the requested contribution from income of a community spouse or a spouse living apart from an SSI-related A/R, as set forth in Section IV.G of 89 ADM-47.

C. Family Member Allowance

Effective January 1, 1996, the family member allowance will be calculated by subtracting the amount of the family member's otherwise available income from \$1,295, dividing the result by three, and rounding up to the nearest dollar. The maximum family member allowance is \$432.

All spousal impoverishment cases involving a family member which are active on or after January 1, 1996, must be recomputed using the appropriate family member allowance formula. Any increase in

the family member allowance, or change in the NAMI of the institutionalized spouse as a result of any increase in the family member allowance, is to be made effective January 1, 1996.

Effective January 1, 1996, the higher family member allowance also must be used in determining any contribution from income from a community spouse or from a spouse living apart from an SSI-related A/R.

Note: The new family member allowance must be used when completing an assessment of a couple's resources and income.

D. Notice Requirements

1. When a social services district changes the amount of one of the items used in the calculation of MA eligibility (even if the result is no change in liability), the district must send to the institutionalized spouse (or authorized representative) and the community spouse:
 - a. an updated "Institutionalized Spouse Budget Worksheet" detailing current income information;
 - b. a copy of the revised MBL budget;
 - c. the DSS-4021 "Notice of Intent to Change the Contribution Toward Chronic Care Costs"; and
 - d. if appropriate, the "Notice to Spouse (Undercare)."

Social services districts are reminded that they must also send the provider a copy of any client notice reflecting an adjustment in the NAMI to allow providers to bill MMIS appropriately.

2. Social services districts must make available the revised "Information Notice to Couples with an Institutionalized Spouse," contained in 96 ADM-11, to all persons requesting such information, and are required to include this notice with all MA applications involving an institutionalized spouse. Social services districts also received this notice as an attachment to the OFIS version of GIS message 95 MA052.

V. **SYSTEM IMPLICATIONS**

MBL

As of December 4, 1995, MBL has supported \$1,919 as the MMMNA when a budget effective From Date of 01/01/96 or greater has been entered. The amount of court ordered support in excess of \$1,919 should be entered on MBL as Additional Allowance Code 19.

The calculation of a couple's countable resources, the amount of resources the community spouse is permitted to retain, and family member allowance(s) must be done using the "Institutionalized Spouse Budget Worksheet." Any resources attributed to the institutionalized spouse should be entered on MBL using the appropriate Categorical Code (CTG) and Chronic Care Indicator (I). The total amount of the family member allowance should be entered on MBL as Additional Allowance Code 23.

VI. **EFFECTIVE DATE**

This ADM is effective August 15, 1996, retroactive to January 1, 1996.

Martin J. Conroy
Acting Deputy Commissioner
Division of Health and Long Term Care