



VA HEALTH CARE

Fact Sheet 164-6
January 2009

Geographic Means Test (GMT) And Copays

Background

Recognizing that the cost of living can vary significantly from one geographic area to another, Congress enacted legislation adding income thresholds based upon geographic locations to the existing VA National Means Test income thresholds for financial assessment purposes. This assists lower-income veterans who live in high-cost areas by providing an enhanced enrollment priority (Priority Group 7) and reducing the amount of their inpatient copay by 80% for treatment of nonservice-connected conditions. The copay reduction applies only to inpatient services. Outpatient services, long-term care, as well as medication copays are not affected by a Geographic Means Test (GMT) determination.

Priority Group

Priority Group 7 was established for GMT-qualifying veterans while veterans with the highest incomes are now classified in Priority Group 8. Priority Group 7 consists of veterans with household income and/or net worth ABOVE the VA National income threshold and income BELOW the geographically-based income threshold for their resident location who do not otherwise qualify for placement in a higher enrollment priority group.

Address Used

The address used to determine your geographically-based income threshold is your permanent address. Typically, it is the location in which you declare residency for voting and tax purposes.

GMT Calculation

The veteran's income is based on the previous calendar year's income that the veteran, the spouse and dependent children earned (household income). The number of persons in the veteran's family will be factored into the calculation to determine the applicable low-income threshold for the veteran's geographic region. At the veteran's request, VA may use projected income for the current year on a case-by-case basis to avoid a hardship to a veteran. For more information about hardship, contact the Enrollment Coordinator at your local VA.

Example:

Veterans living in Dupage County, Illinois 60504 would qualify for placement in Priority Group 7 and be GMT Copay Required; if gross household income is above the 2009 VA

National income threshold of \$29,402 but below the 2009 GMT threshold of \$42,200, for their area.

GMT Income Thresholds

The GMT income threshold tables can be viewed on the internet at <http://www.va.gov/healtheligibility/Library/pubs/GMTIncomeThresholds/>. Because VA uses prior year income for financial assessment purposes, the income threshold used for current year financial assessments will always indicate the prior calendar year (for example, 2007 GMT income thresholds are used for financial assessments completed in calendar year 2008).

VA National Income Thresholds

The VA National income thresholds can be viewed on the internet at <http://www.va.gov/healtheligibility/Library/pubs/VAINcomeThresholds/>. These income levels are updated each year.

Current Inpatient Copay

Because of the annual changes to the copay rates – including the annual cap on medication copays – they are published separately. Current year rates can be obtained at any VA health care facility or on the eligibility page on our web site at <http://www.va.gov/healtheligibility/costs/>.

Apply or Enroll for VA Medical Benefits

Veterans can apply for enrollment by completing VA Form 10-10EZ, Application for Health Benefits, at <http://www.va.gov/1010ez.htm> which can be obtained on the Internet, or from the nearest VA health care facility.

Questions

Contact the VA Health Benefits Service Center at 1-877-222-VETS (8387) or visit VA's website at <http://www.va.gov/healtheligibility/>.