



Medical Assistance for Workers with Disabilities (MAWD)

A Guide to Eligibility

Medical Assistance for Workers with Disabilities (MAWD) is a state health insurance program for people who are working and have a disability or serious health condition.

MAWD is often a good option for people who make too much money to qualify for other categories of Medical Assistance (MA or Medicaid) but who nonetheless need health insurance. MAWD provides comprehensive health insurance coverage and, as compared to other MA programs, has high income and resource limits. MAWD also has flexible work and disability requirements. This guide explains each MAWD eligibility requirement in depth and tells you how to apply for MAWD coverage.

The Basics

To qualify for MAWD, you must be:

- Age 16 through 64
- Disabled or have a serious/chronic health condition, and
- Working (even a few hours per month)

You must also have:

- Income under 250% of the Federal Poverty Level (*see next page*); and
- Less than \$10,000 in countable¹ resources

How does the MAWD program define disability?

¹ “Resources” are things like money in a bank account, cash on hand, retirement savings, cars, and properties. Your home, one motor vehicle, and personal items like furniture and clothing DO NOT count against the \$10,000 limit. See page 4 in this guide for more information about resources.

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For purposes of MAWD, disability is not defined as an inability to work. Rather, it is a more nuanced assessment that will be made by a Medical Review Team within the Department of Human Services (DHS) upon review of your medical records.

If you receive Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), you automatically meet the disability standard for MAWD and you do not need to show any additional proof of disability.

If you don't receive SSDI, you can still meet the disability standard for MAWD. You will need a doctor to verify your medical condition(s) and how long they are expected to last. Your doctor can do this with a basic letter or by completing the "[Employability Assessment Form](#)" (PA 1663). Include the letter or form with your application for MAWD.

Don't try to predict whether your health conditions will meet the MAWD disability standard. If you have a long-lasting or chronic health condition, and you meet the other requirements, you should apply for MAWD!

What is MAWD's income limit?

MAWD has an income limit of 250% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). You must report all your income and your spouse's income when applying. Your household size for MAWD will either be 1 (if you are single) or 2 (if you are married). Children are not included in household size for MAWD.

<u>Household Size</u>	<u>250% FPL in 2024 (per month)</u>
1	\$3,138
2	\$4,259

Not all income counts against this limit. For any "unearned" income (e.g. SSDI), the CAO will apply the unearned income deduction² and not count 20 per month. For any "earned" income (e.g. from work), the CAO will apply the earned income deductions³ and:

- **not count** the first \$65, and
- **not count** half of the remainder, and
- **deduct** any impairment-related work expenses and transportation costs.

Example: Brad receives \$1,100 per month from SSDI and earns \$20 per month babysitting. His wife Angelina earns \$2,065 per month from work.

The CAO will apply earned income disregards and count \$1000 of Angelina's income ($2,065 - 65 = 2,000 / 2 = 1,000$) and none of Brad's work income ($20 - 65 = 0$). Counting \$1,080 for Brad ($1,100 - 20$) and \$1,000 for Angelina, Brad has a countable household income of **\$2,080** for purposes of MAWD eligibility.

Therefore, Brad is under the \$4,259 income limit for a household of 2, and he is income-eligible for MAWD.

² See [MA Handbook Chapter 360.31](#), Earned Income Deductions—SSI-Related.

³ See [MA Handbook Chapter 360.32](#), Unearned Income Deductions—SSI-Related.

If you have no unearned income, the CAO must apply the \$20 deduction to your earned income. If you have less than \$20 in unearned income, the CAO must apply the \$20 deduction to unearned income first (leaving you with \$0 unearned income), then they must apply the remainder of the \$20 deduction to your earned income. The amount(s) left over after both the earned income deduction and the unearned income deduction are taken must be below the MAWD monthly income limit.

Do I need to work a certain number of hours to qualify?

No. MAWD requires only that you work *some amount* each month. Each of these examples will likely meet the MAWD work requirement:

- babysitting a child
- helping a neighbor with yard work, or
- cleaning at your local church

You must get paid for this work; it cannot be on a volunteer basis. If you don't get a paystub, being paid in cash is fine. Get a basic letter from the person you are working for that explains what work you do, how often, and how much they pay you. This letter will be your proof of work.

Can I work if I receive SSDI?

Yes, you can work and still get Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). If you are on SSDI, you are required to report any earnings to Social Security. There are limits on how much you can earn each month and still qualify for SSDI. You should consult a lawyer who specializes in SSDI to discuss this situation more.

What is MAWD's resource limit and what counts as a resource?

MAWD has a resource limit of \$10,000. Resources are things like money in a checking or savings account, cash on hand, cars, and properties. Retirement savings (e.g. 401(k), IRA) count against this limit, even if you would face taxes and penalties for withdrawing early from your retirement. Your home, one vehicle, and personal items like furniture and clothing DO NOT count against the \$10,000 limit.

Will MAWD cost me anything?

Yes. MAWD has a monthly premium of 5% of your income. This is based on your income only; here your spouse's income will not count (even though it counts for eligibility purposes). In calculating

the 5% premium, the CAO will apply the income disregards discussed above, then your premium will be 5% of that countable income.

Example: Brad is on MAWD and receives SSDI in the amount of \$1,100 per month. His wife Angelina works and earns \$2,065 per month. Brad's MAWD premium is \$54 per month ($1,100 - 20 = 1,080 \times .05$). Angelina's income does not count towards Brad's premium calculation.

How Do I Apply for MAWD?

There are four ways you can apply for MAWD:

- **In person:** apply at your local County Assistance Office (CAO);
- **Online:** apply through www.COMPASS.state.pa.us;
- **By phone:** (866) 550-4355; or
- **By mail:** submit a paper application (form [PA 600WD](#)) to your local CAO.

Remember: along with your application and supporting documents (photo ID, proof of address, etc.) you will need to provide proof of work and disability to be reviewed for MAWD. You can prove you are working by submitting a paystub or letter from your employer. You can prove disability either by receiving SSDI benefits (submit a copy of your award letter as proof of both income and disability) or by submitting a letter or the Employability Assessment Form completed by your doctor.

For More Information

Contact the Pennsylvania Health Law Project at 1-800-274-3258 or visit www.phlp.org.