

April 2026 Consumer Newsletter



Consumer Assistance News provides information, tips, and updates to help people understand health coverage and healthcare options.

Spring has officially arrived, but the springtime weather hasn't caught up just yet! As you wait for the sunshine and songbirds to arrive, why not take a moment to read the April edition of Consumer News? This month we're celebrating Medicaid Awareness Month and Minority Health Month, sharing a few seasonal health tips, some CoverME.gov and MaineCare reminders, and defining a health coverage term of the month.

Minority Health Month



[National Minority Health Month](#) is observed every April. This annual observance aims to inform people about the gaps many minorities face accessing health care and promote the importance of health equity for underserved populations.

Social, economic, and environmental factors can all impact health equity. For many racial and ethnic minority groups, this means higher rates of chronic illness like cancer, diabetes, and heart conditions. Here in Maine and around the country, work must continue to improve health outcomes and expand access to care.

Research shows that minority populations are more likely to:

- Be uninsured or underinsured

- Face barriers to preventive services like screenings
- Receive lower-quality care due to cultural and/or language barriers

For Mainers dealing with any of the challenges above, help is available. People who meet certain income rules, those who are under the age of 21, and pregnant people are eligible to receive full MaineCare benefits. People can learn their health coverage options from anywhere in Maine by calling our HelpLine at 1-800-965-7476. The call and help are free and confidential. Callers can find out if they qualify for options like MaineCare, which covers services like preventive screenings. Language and translation services can be provided.

Spring Health Reminders



Climate change isn't just making Maine's spring weather harder to predict, it's making allergy and tick season arrive earlier and last longer!

For Mainers with spring allergies, things like itchy eyes, a runny nose, a sore throat, and sneezing are signs that [allergy season](#) is here. Most Mainers are used to those symptoms starting in May, but many are already feeling telltale allergy signs as early as March. Why? Because climate change is making the growing season longer for the plants that make pollen. Those plants are budding and blooming earlier, putting pollen into the air, and adding up to 2 months to allergy season in Maine.

A warmer spring in Maine means a longer [tick season](#), and that's not good news for Mainers who enjoy spending time outside. Tick bites can be dangerous, and when weather conditions let ticks thrive, they can

quickly multiply. Being aware of ticks is the best way to protect against the diseases they spread. After spending time outdoors, Mainers should check clothing, gear, skin, and hair for ticks. Check pets too, since they can carry ticks into your home. If possible, shower soon after being outside. If a tick is found, use tweezers or a tick spoon to remove it. If the tick was attached, save it to be tested, then call your health care provider about the bite to find out if treatment may be needed.



Each April, Medicaid Awareness Month celebrates the health care program that covers nearly 70 million Americans, including children, individuals and parents, seniors, those with disabilities, and mothers. Medicaid in Maine is called [MaineCare](#). Mainers can apply for MaineCare any time of the year at [My Maine Connection](#)! MaineCare helps Mainers access the health care they need, like prescription drugs, hospital services, oral health care, preventive care, mental health care, substance use treatment, long-term care, and access to other health care services throughout the state. Maine people are eligible at different [income levels](#). For example, children living in a family of three with income up to \$6,944.

Getting answers to MaineCare questions is easy. Find out if you qualify and get help applying by calling our free HelpLine at 1-800-965-7476.



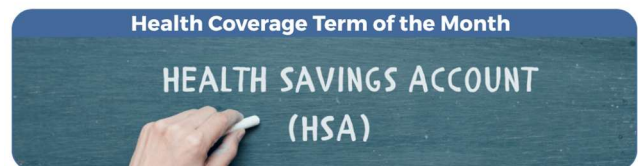
CoverME.gov recently updated the steps people need to take to qualify for certain [Special Enrollment Periods](#) (SEPs), which allow people to apply for coverage outside of open enrollment. Some SEPs will now require more documents, and the process of getting an SEP now requires a call to the CoverME.gov Consumer Assistance Center at 1-866-636-0355.



The Office of Child and Family Services published a [new guide](#) to the Katie Beckett program. [Katie Beckett](#) is a MaineCare program for children living at home who have complex medical needs or long-term disabilities. The program allows the child to be cared for at home rather than in an institution. The program only looks at the child's income and assets for eligibility purposes. Parents' income may be considered for determining a premium.

If you have questions about the Katie Beckett application and renewal process, call the Office for Family Independence at 1-855-797-4357 and choose "Long Term Care" from the menu. You can also call our HelpLine at 1-800-965-7476 for more information.

MaineCare is now on social media! Follow them on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).



Health Savings Account (HSA)

A [Health Savings Account \(HSA\)](#) is a type of savings account that is used to pay for qualified medical expenses. The money set aside in an HSA is tax free. The money

used for medical expenses is also tax free. HSAs work with high-deductible health plans, such as bronze plans in the Marketplace. Plans at [CoverME.gov](https://www.coverme.gov) with the letters “HSA” will all work with a health savings account. Employer plans may also work with an HSA. The employer may contribute to their employees’ HSA.

Qualified medical expenses include co-pays, medical bills counting towards the plan deductible, bills counting toward the out-of-pocket max, prescriptions, eyeglasses, contact lenses, and dental care.

An HSA is set up at a bank or credit union and linked to the health plan. [The IRS sets a](#) limit on the amount that can be contributed to an HSA annually. The allowable amount is \$4,400 for a single person and \$8,750 for a family for 2026. When money is left over in the HSA at the end of the year, it rolls into the new year. The funds are not lost or taken away.

Maine's Drug Take Back Day is April 25th

Learn where to drop off your household medications [HERE](#)

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a single, light-colored, cylindrical pill between their thumb and index finger. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light blue.

To properly dispose of syringes, sharps, or illicit drugs in Maine, visit [MyOldMeds.com](https://www.myoldmeds.com) to find a drop off near you.

Have Questions? We Can Help!

Consumers for Affordable Health Care

Three square icons with rounded corners, each containing a white symbol on a dark background. From left to right: a telephone handset, an envelope, and an at-sign (@).

Call our free HelpLine 1-800-965-7476