

to acknowledge or respond to them individually. We will consider all comments we receive by the date and time specified in the Comment Period section of this preamble, and, if we proceed with a subsequent document, we will respond to the comments in the preamble of that document.

Authority: Sections 1816(f), 1834(a)(12), and 1842(b) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395h(f), 1395m(a)(12), and 1395u(b)) (Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Program No. 93.774, Medicare—Supplementary Medical Insurance Program)

Dated: May 19, 2005.

Mark B. McClellan,

Administrator, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services

[CMS-8025-N]

RIN 0938-AO01

Medicare Program; Part A Premium for Calendar Year 2006 for the Uninsured Aged and for Certain Disabled Individuals Who Have Exhausted Other Entitlement

AGENCY: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), HHS.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: This annual notice announces Medicare's Hospital Insurance (Part A) premium for uninsured enrollees in calendar year (CY) 2006. This premium is to be paid by enrollees age 65 and over who are not otherwise eligible (hereafter known as the "uninsured aged") and for certain disabled individuals who have exhausted other entitlement. The monthly Part A premium for the 12 months beginning January 1, 2006 for these individuals will be \$393. The reduced premium for certain other individuals as described in this notice will be \$216. Section 1818(d) of the Social Security Act specifies the method to be used to determine these amounts.

EFFECTIVE DATE: This notice is effective on January 1, 2006.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Clare McFarland, (410) 786-6390.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Background

Section 1818 of the Social Security Act (the Act) provides for voluntary

enrollment in the Medicare Hospital Insurance program (Medicare Part A), subject to payment of a monthly premium, of certain persons aged 65 and older who are uninsured under the Old-Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance (OASDI) program or the Railroad Retirement Act and do not otherwise meet the requirements for entitlement to Medicare Part A. (Persons insured under the OASDI program or the Railroad Retirement Act and certain others do not have to pay premiums for hospital insurance.)

Section 1818A of the Act provides for voluntary enrollment in Medicare Part A, subject to payment of a monthly premium, of certain disabled individuals who have exhausted other entitlement. These are individuals who are not currently entitled to Part A coverage, but who were entitled to coverage due to a disabling impairment under section 226(b) of the Act, and who would still be entitled to Part A coverage if their earnings had not exceeded the statutorily defined substantial gainful activity amount (section 223(d)(4) of the Act).

Section 1818A(d)(2) of the Act specifies that the provisions relating to premiums under section 1818(d) through section 1818(f) of the Act for the aged will also apply to certain disabled individuals as described above.

Section 1818(d) of the Act requires us to estimate, on an average per capita basis, the amount to be paid from the Federal Hospital Insurance Trust Fund for services incurred in the following calendar year (including the associated administrative costs) on behalf of individuals aged 65 and over who will be entitled to benefits under Medicare Part A. We must then determine, during September of each year, the monthly actuarial rate for the following year (the per capita amount estimated above divided by 12) and publish the dollar amount for the monthly premium in the succeeding CY. If the premium is not a multiple of \$1, the premium is rounded to the nearest multiple of \$1 (or, if it is a multiple of 50 cents but not of \$1, it is rounded to the next highest \$1).

Section 13508 of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993 (Pub. L. 103-66) amended section 1818(d) of the Act to provide for a reduction in the premium amount for certain voluntary enrollees (section 1818 and section 1818A). The reduction applies to an individual who is eligible to buy into the Medicare Part A program and who, as of the last day of the previous month—

- Had at least 30 quarters of coverage under title II of the Act;

- Was married, and had been married for the previous 1-year period, to a person who had at least 30 quarters of coverage;

- Had been married to a person for at least 1 year at the time of the person's death if, at the time of death, the person had at least 30 quarters of coverage; or

- Is divorced from a person and had been married to the person for at least 10 years at the time of the divorce if, at the time of the divorce, the person had at least 30 quarters of coverage.

Section 1818(d)(4)(A) of the Act specifies that the premium that these individuals will pay for CY 2006 will be equal to the premium for uninsured aged enrollees reduced by 45 percent.

II. Monthly Premium Amount for CY 2006

The monthly premium for the uninsured aged and certain disabled individuals who have exhausted other entitlement for the 12 months beginning January 1, 2006, is \$393.

The monthly premium for those individuals subject to the 45 percent reduction in the monthly premium is \$216.

III. Monthly Premium Rate Calculation

As discussed in section I of this notice, the monthly Medicare Part A premium is equal to the estimated monthly actuarial rate for CY 2006 rounded to the nearest multiple of \$1 and equals one-twelfth of the average per capita amount, which is determined by projecting the number of Part A enrollees aged 65 years and over as well as the benefits and administrative costs that will be incurred on their behalf.

The steps involved in projecting these future costs to the Federal Hospital Insurance Trust Fund are:

- Establishing the present cost of services furnished to beneficiaries, by type of service, to serve as a projection base;
- Projecting increases in payment amounts for each of the service types; and
- Projecting increases in administrative costs.

We base our projections for CY 2006 on: (a) current historical data, and (b) projection assumptions derived from current law and the Mid-Session Review of the President's Fiscal Year 2006 Budget.

We estimate that in CY 2006, 35.205 million people aged 65 years and over will be entitled to benefits (without premium payment) and that they will incur \$166.121 billion of benefits and related administrative costs. Thus, the estimated monthly average per capita amount is \$393.23 and the monthly

premium is \$393. The full monthly premium reduced by 45 percent is \$216.

IV. Costs to Beneficiaries

The CY 2006 premium of \$393 is about 5 percent higher than the CY 2005 premium of \$375.

We estimate that approximately 523,000 enrollees will voluntarily enroll in Medicare Part A by paying the full premium. We estimate an additional 1,000 enrollees will pay the reduced premium. We estimate that the aggregate cost to enrollees paying these premiums will be about \$113 million in CY 2006 over the amount that they paid in CY 2005.

V. Waiver of Proposed Notice and Comment Period

We are not using notice and comment rulemaking in this notification of Part A premiums for CY 2006, as that procedure is unnecessary because of the lack of discretion in the statutory formula that is used to calculate the premium and the solely ministerial function that this notice serves. The Administrative Procedure Act (APA) permits agencies to waive notice and comment rulemaking when notice and public comment thereon are unnecessary. On this basis, we waive publication of a proposed notice and a solicitation of public comments.

VI. Regulatory Impact Statement

We have examined the impacts of this notice as required by Executive Order 12866 (September 1993, Regulatory Planning and Review), the Regulatory Flexibility Act (RFA) (September 19, 1980, Pub. L. 96-354), section 1102(b) of the Act, the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-4), and Executive Order 13132.

Executive Order 12866 directs agencies to assess all costs and benefits of available regulatory alternatives and, if regulation is necessary, to select regulatory approaches that maximize net benefits (including potential economic, environmental, public health and safety effects, distributive impacts, and equity). As stated in section IV of this notice, we estimate that the overall effect of these changes in the Part A premium will be a cost to voluntary enrollees (section 1818 and section 1818A of the Act) of about \$113 million. Therefore, this notice is a major rule as defined in Title 5, United States Code, section 804(2) and is an economically significant rule under Executive Order 12866.

The RFA requires agencies to analyze options for regulatory relief of small entities. For purposes of the RFA, small entities include small businesses,

nonprofit organizations, and government agencies. Most hospitals and most other providers and suppliers are small entities, either by nonprofit status or by having revenues of \$6 million to \$29 million in any 1 year. Individuals and States are not included in the definition of a small entity. We have determined that this notice will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities. Therefore, we are not preparing an analysis for the RFA.

In addition, section 1102(b) of the Act requires us to prepare a regulatory impact analysis if a rule may have a significant impact on the operations of a substantial number of small rural hospitals. This analysis must conform to the provisions of section 604 of the RFA. For purposes of section 1102(b) of the Act, we define a small rural hospital as a hospital that is located outside of a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) and has fewer than 100 beds.

We have determined that this notice will not have a significant effect on the operations of a substantial number of small rural hospitals. Therefore, we are not preparing an analysis for section 1102(b) of the Act.

Section 202 of the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act of 1995 also requires that agencies assess anticipated costs and benefits before issuing any rule that may result in expenditure in any 1 year by State, local, or tribal governments, in the aggregate, or by the private sector, of \$110 million. This notice has no consequential effect on State, local, or tribal governments or on the private sector.

Executive Order 13132 establishes certain requirements that an agency must meet when it publishes a proposed rule (and subsequent final rule) that imposes substantial direct requirement costs on State and local governments, preempts State law, or otherwise has Federalism implications. This notice will not have a substantial effect on State or local governments.

In accordance with the provisions of Executive Order 12866, this regulation was reviewed by the Office of Management and Budget.

Authority: Sections 1818(d)(2) and 1818A(d)(2) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395i-2(d)(2) and 1395i-2a(d)(2)). (Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Program No. 93.773, Medicare—Hospital Insurance)

Dated: September 12, 2005.

Mark B. McClellan,

Administrator, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

Dated: September 15, 2005.

Michael O. Leavitt,

Secretary.

[FR Doc. 05-18839 Filed 9-16-05; 4:00 pm]

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services

[CMS-8027-N]

RIN 0938-AO02

Medicare Program; Medicare Part B Monthly Actuarial Rates, Premium Rate, and Annual Deductible for Calendar Year 2006

AGENCY: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), HHS.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: This notice announces the monthly actuarial rates for aged (age 65 and over) and disabled (under age 65) beneficiaries enrolled in Part B of the Medicare Supplementary Medical Insurance (SMI) program beginning January 1, 2006. In addition, this notice announces the monthly premium for aged and disabled beneficiaries and the annual deductible to be paid during 2006. The monthly actuarial rates for 2006 are \$176.90 for aged enrollees and \$203.70 for disabled enrollees. The monthly Part B premium rate for 2006 is \$88.50 which is equal to 50 percent of the monthly actuarial rate for aged enrollees or about 25 percent of Part B costs for aged enrollees. (The 2005 premium rate was \$78.20.) The Part B deductible for 2006 is \$124.00.

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2006.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: M. Kent Clemens, (410) 786-6391.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Background

Part B is the voluntary portion of the Medicare program that pays all or part of the costs for physicians' services, outpatient hospital services, certain home health services, services furnished by rural health clinics, ambulatory surgical centers, comprehensive outpatient rehabilitation facilities, and certain other medical and health services not covered by Medicare Part A, Hospital Insurance. Medicare Part B is available to individuals who are entitled to Medicare Part A, as well as