



## Maximizing Public Benefits: New Developments

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### ***Definition of “Special Needs” for the SSI Program***

- Payment directly to providers for any goods that are not countable as resources; or
- Payment for any services used by the beneficiary;
- Except each month’s unreimbursed payments for food or shelter are counted as having a value not exceeding one-third of the maximum SSI monthly benefit rate plus \$20.
- And don’t give the beneficiary cash or anything so easily converted to cash that it counts as a resource.

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## ***Your Authors' Definition of "Special Needs"***

- **"Special Needs": any help to be furnished in-kind (not cash or easily converted to cash) that is not counted by the benefit program as income or resources.**
- **Most Medicaid programs use the "methodology" (definitions of "resources" and "income") of the SSI program.**
- **However, there are some important differences among programs. See Appendix 3: Three Ways Different Medicaid Programs Define "Income"**

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## ***Appendix 3: Three Ways Different Medicaid Programs Define "Income"***

- **SSI**
- **Community Attendant Services and Medicare Savings Programs**
- **Nursing Home and HCBS Waiver Medicaid**

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## ***A Trustee Must Always Determine--***

- Which program(s) do(es) the beneficiary have or need?
- Which of the three categories is/are involved?
- Given the beneficiary's needs and the trust's assets, which of the permissible distributions are in the beneficiary's best interest?



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## ***But Consider Also the "Resource" Limit***

- Children's Medicaid, Pregnant Women's Medicaid, Parents and Caretakers Medicaid, and Breast and Cervical Cancer Medicaid have no resource limits
- Texas Long-Term Care Medicaid programs not requiring SSI eligibility allow transfers to UTMA accounts for persons under age 21 with no transfer penalty
- Texas Long-Term Care Medicaid programs have a resource limit of \$2,000 for unmarried persons (and some who are married but separated); but ineligible spouses of married applicants can keep more—sometimes a lot more



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20<sup>th</sup> Annual Changes and Trends Affecting Special Needs Trusts session  
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