

What is CHAMPVA?

CHAMPVA (Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs) is a federal health benefits program administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and managed by the VHA Office of Community Care (VHA CC) in Denver, Colorado. VHA CC processes CHAMPVA applications and medical claims, verifies eligibility and authorizes benefits.

What is a supplemental insurance policy?

A CHAMPVA supplemental policy is an insurance policy that may pay a portion of your CHAMPVA cost share and deductible. Supplemental policies are insurance policies that you pay for whether you use them or not. A supplemental policy always pays after CHAMPVA, and does not usually pay for medical benefits not covered under CHAMPVA.

What is not covered by a supplemental policy?

Each policy is different. Most policies only cover items and services that are part of the CHAMPVA program. This means what is not covered under CHAMPVA may not be covered by the supplemental policy either. Be sure to read the list of exclusions thoroughly.

Do I need a supplemental insurance policy?

Here is a list of things to consider when deciding whether or not to purchase a CHAMPVA supplemental policy:

- CHAMPVA is your only health coverage
- You have a chronic health condition
- You take prescription medication on a regular basis
- You expect to be admitted to a hospital overnight in the next year or two
- You have limited financial resources
- You anticipate your medical expenses will increase in the next year or two

What impact does MEDICARE have on these policies?

Some of these policies automatically become MEDIGAP policies when you become eligible for MEDICARE (normally at age 65).

What is a MEDIGAP policy and how does it impact CHAMPVA?

MEDIGAP policies are private insurance policies designed specifically to compliment MEDICARE. If you have MEDICARE and a MEDIGAP policy, CHAMPVA pays after both.

If I have MEDICARE and CHAMPVA, do I need a MEDIGAP policy?

For most people, the answer is no. CHAMPVA and MEDICARE combined provide a broad range of services, and with coordination of benefits there is seldom an out-of-pocket expense for dual-eligibles. Individuals with MEDICARE and CHAMPVA who do not have other pharmacy insurance can use the Meds by Mail program to get their medication for free, so there is normally not a need for a MEDIGAP policy to cover prescription medication.

What should I consider if I decide to purchase a supplemental insurance policy?

CHAMPVA does not endorse policies offered by commercial vendors; however, the considerations below may help you narrow down the choices of potential supplemental policies.

- The policy should automatically convert to a MEDICARE supplement, without a medical examination, when you become MEDICARE eligible.
- Look for a policy that has the shortest waiting time for pre-existing conditions.
- If the policy is sponsored by a Veteran-related organization (such as the American Legion), be sure you are eligible to join the organization. Remember to add in the cost of membership when you calculate the total cost of the supplemental insurance policy.
- Look for a policy that costs you less in premiums (and membership fees) than you would spend on your health care in the next year if you did not have a supplemental policy.
- And of course, compare costs and coverage.

Where can I get more information on supplemental insurance policies?

While VA does not endorse commercial vendors, you can find some useful information by doing an Internet search for "CHAMPVA Supplemental Insurance."

Please note: These organizations and policies are not affiliated with VA, VHA CC or any other government agency.

Medicare.gov has more information about MEDIGAP policies at <https://www.medicare.gov/supplement-other-insurance/>.