

LEGISLATIVE BILL 641

Approved by the Governor May 20, 2025

Introduced by Bostar, 29.

A BILL FOR AN ACT relating to the medical assistance program; to amend section 68-919, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2024; to change provisions relating to medicaid estate recovery by the Department of Health and Human Services; and to repeal the original section.
Be it enacted by the people of the State of Nebraska,

Section 1. Section 68-919, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2024, is amended to read:

68-919 (1) The recipient of medical assistance under the medical assistance program shall be indebted to the department for the total amount paid for medical assistance on behalf of the recipient if:

(a) The recipient was fifty-five years of age or older at the time the medical assistance was provided; or

(b) The recipient resided in a medical institution and, at the time of institutionalization or application for medical assistance, whichever is later, the department determines that the recipient could not have reasonably been expected to be discharged and resume living at home. For purposes of this section, medical institution means a nursing facility, an intermediate care facility for persons with developmental disabilities, an assisted living facility, or an inpatient hospital.

(2)(a) ~~(2)~~ The debt accruing under subsection (1) of this section arises during the life of the recipient but shall be held in abeyance until the death of the recipient. Any such debt to the department that exists when the recipient dies shall be recovered only after the death of the recipient's spouse, if any, and only after the recipient is not survived by a child who either is under twenty-one years of age or is blind or totally and permanently disabled as defined by the Supplemental Security Income criteria. In recovering such debt, the department shall not foreclose on a lien on the home of the recipient (i) (a) if a sibling of the recipient with an equity interest in the home has lawfully resided in the home for at least one year before the recipient's admission and has lived there continuously since the date of the recipient's admission or (ii) (b) while the home is the residence of an adult child who has lived in the recipient's home for at least two years immediately before the recipient was institutionalized, has lived there continuously since that time, and can establish to the satisfaction of the department that he or she provided care that delayed the recipient's admission. Such care may be reimbursed or unreimbursed.

(b) A written attestation by a physician stating that a sibling or an adult child of a recipient provided care that delayed the recipient's admission to a medical institution shall be sufficient documentation for the department to avoid foreclosure on the lien described in this subsection.

(3) The debt shall include the total amount of medical assistance provided when the recipient was fifty-five years of age or older or during a period of institutionalization as described in subsection (1) of this section and shall not include interest.

(4)(a) It is the intent of the Legislature that the debt specified in subsection (1) of this section be collected by the department before any portion of the estate of a recipient of medical assistance is enjoyed by or transferred to a person not specified in subsection (2) of this section as a result of the death of such recipient. The debt may be recovered from the estate of a recipient of medical assistance. The department shall undertake all reasonable and cost-effective measures to enforce recovery under the Medical Assistance Act. All persons specified in subsections (2) and (4) of this section shall cooperate with the department in the enforcement of recovery under the act.

(b) For purposes of this section:

(i) Estate of a recipient of medical assistance means any real estate, personal property, or other asset in which the recipient had any legal title or interest at or immediately preceding the time of the recipient's death, to the extent of such interests. In furtherance and not in limitation of the foregoing, the estate of a recipient of medical assistance also includes:

(A) Assets to be transferred to a beneficiary described in section 77-2004 or 77-2005 in relation to the recipient through a revocable trust or other similar arrangement which has become irrevocable by reason of the recipient's death; and

(B) Notwithstanding anything to the contrary in subdivision (3) or (4) of section 68-923, assets conveyed or otherwise transferred to a survivor, an heir, an assignee, a beneficiary, or a devisee of the recipient of medical assistance through joint tenancy, tenancy in common, transfer on death deed, survivorship, conveyance of a remainder interest, retention of a life estate or of an estate for a period of time, living trust, or other arrangement by which value or possession is transferred to or realized by the beneficiary of the conveyance or transfer at or as a result of the recipient's death. Such other

arrangements include insurance policies or annuities in which the recipient of medical assistance had at the time of death any incidents of ownership of the policy or annuity or the power to designate beneficiaries and any pension rights or completed retirement plans or accounts of the recipient. A completed retirement plan or account is one which because of the death of the recipient of medical assistance ceases to have elements of retirement relating to such recipient and under which one or more beneficiaries exist after such recipient's death; and

(ii) Notwithstanding anything to the contrary in subdivision (4)(b) of this section, estate of a recipient of medical assistance does not include:

(A) Insurance proceeds, any trust account subject to the Burial Pre-Need Sale Act, or any limited lines funeral insurance policy to the extent used to pay for funeral, burial, or cremation expenses of the recipient of medical assistance;

(B) Conveyances of real estate made prior to August 24, 2017, that are subject to the grantor's retention of a life estate or an estate for a period of time;

(C) Life estate interests in real estate after sixty months from the date of recording a deed with retention of a life estate by the recipient of medical assistance; and

(D) Any pension rights or completed retirement plans to the extent that such rights or plans are exempt from claims for reimbursement of medical assistance under federal law; and -

(E) Life estate interests in real estate after twelve months from the recording of a deed with retention of a life estate by the recipient of medical assistance if a relative resides solely and continuously with the recipient and establishes to the satisfaction of the department that the relative provided care that delayed the recipient's admission to a medical institution. A written attestation by a physician stating that the relative of the recipient provided care that delayed the recipient's admission to a medical institution shall be sufficient documentation to exclude the life estate interest from the recipient's estate under this subdivision.

(c) The department, upon application of the personal representative of an estate, any person or entity otherwise authorized under the Nebraska Probate Code to act on behalf of a decedent, any person or entity having an interest in assets of the decedent which are subject to this subsection, a successor trustee of a revocable trust or other similar arrangement which has become irrevocable by reason of the decedent's death, or any other person or entity holding assets of the decedent described in this subsection, shall timely certify to the applicant, that as of a designated date, whether medical assistance reimbursement is due or an application for medical assistance was pending that may result in medical assistance reimbursement due. An application for a certificate under this subdivision shall be provided to the department in a delivery manner and at an address designated by the department, which manner may include email. The department shall post the acceptable manner of delivery on its website. Any application that fails to conform with such manner is void. Notwithstanding the lack of an order by a court designating the applicant as a person or entity who may receive information protected by applicable privacy laws, the applicant shall have the authority of a personal representative for the limited purpose of seeking and obtaining from the department this certification. If, in response to a certification request, the department certifies that reimbursement for medical assistance is due, the department may release some or all of the property of a decedent from the provisions of this subsection.

(d) An action for recovery of the debt created under subsection (1) of this section may be brought by the department against the estate of a recipient of medical assistance as defined in subdivision (4)(b) of this section at any time before five years after the last of the following events:

(i) The death of the recipient of medical assistance;

(ii) The death of the recipient's spouse, if applicable;

(iii) The attainment of the age of twenty-one years by the youngest of the recipient's minor children, if applicable; or

(iv) A determination that any adult child of the recipient is no longer blind or totally and permanently disabled as defined by the Supplemental Security Income criteria, if applicable.

(5) In any probate proceedings in which the department has filed a claim under this section, no additional evidence of foundation shall be required for the admission of the department's payment record supporting its claim if the payment record bears the seal of the department, is certified as a true copy, and bears the signature of an authorized representative of the department.

(6) The department may waive or compromise its claim, in whole or in part, if the department determines that enforcement of the claim would not be in the best interests of the state or would result in undue hardship as provided in rules and regulations of the department.

(7)(a) Whenever the department has provided medical assistance because of sickness or injury to any person resulting from a third party's wrongful act or negligence and the person has recovered damages from such third party, the department shall have the right to recover the medical assistance it paid from any amounts that the person has received as follows:

(i) In those cases in which the person is fully compensated by the recovery, the department shall be fully reimbursed subject to its contribution to attorney's fees and costs as provided in subdivision (b) of this subsection; or

(ii) In those cases in which the person is not fully compensated by the recovery, the department shall be reimbursed that portion of the recovery that represents the same proportionate reduction of medical expenses paid that the recovery amount bears to full compensation of the person subject to its contributions to attorney's fees and costs as provided in subdivision (b) of this subsection.

(b) When an action or claim is brought by the person and the person incurs or will incur a personal liability to pay attorney's fees and costs of litigation or costs incurred in pursuit of a claim, the department's claim for reimbursement of the medical assistance provided to the person shall be reduced by an amount that represents the department's reasonable pro rata share of attorney's fees and costs of litigation or the costs incurred in pursuit of a claim.

(8) The department may adopt and promulgate rules and regulations to carry out this section.

(9) The changes made to this section by Laws 2019, LB593, shall apply retroactively to August 30, 2015.

Sec. 2. Original section 68-919, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2024, is repealed.