

# Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE)

## Official Overview for Families Navigating Aging Parent Care

### What PACE Is

The Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) is a federal Medicare and Medicaid program designed to help older adults who need a nursing home level of care but want to remain living safely in the community.

PACE is built around one core idea:

instead of fragmented services, it provides coordinated, all-in-one care.

According to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), PACE is a comprehensive model that combines medical care, long-term care, and social support services for eligible seniors, most of whom are dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid.

The goal is simple:

to help older adults stay at home or in the community for as long as safely possible instead of entering a nursing home.

### How PACE Works

PACE functions as both a health plan and a care coordination system.

Once enrolled, participants are assigned an interdisciplinary care team, which may include:

- Primary care physicians
- Nurses
- Social workers
- Therapists (physical, occupational, speech)
- Dietitians and other specialists

This team works together to design and manage one unified care plan tailored to the individual's needs.

Instead of families having to coordinate multiple providers, appointments, transportation, medications, and home care separately, PACE becomes the central system that manages everything.

### Services Covered Under PACE

PACE provides a full range of Medicare- and Medicaid-covered services, including but not limited to:

- Primary and specialty medical care
- Hospital care and emergency services
- Prescription drugs
- Physical, occupational, and speech therapy
- Home care services
- Adult day health center care
- Transportation to medical appointments and PACE centers
- Mental health services and counseling
- Meals and nutritional counseling
- Social services and support

Many programs also include additional supports such as recreational therapy, personal care assistance, and caregiver support services when needed.

A key feature of PACE is that services are not limited to a fixed list—care teams can authorize any service deemed necessary to maintain or improve the participant’s health.

## Who Qualifies for PACE

To enroll in PACE, an individual must:

- Be 55 years or older
- Live in a PACE service area
- Be certified as needing a nursing home level of care
- Be able to live safely in the community with PACE support

Most participants are eligible for both Medicare and Medicaid, but some may also join through private pay depending on the program.

Enrollment is voluntary, and participants may leave the program at any time.

## How PACE Is Funded

PACE is jointly funded through Medicare and Medicaid capitation payments, meaning the program receives a fixed monthly amount per enrollee to cover all care.

For most participants:

- Medicaid pays most or all costs
- Medicare contributes for eligible services
- Many participants have no copays, deductibles, or out-of-pocket costs

This structure allows PACE programs to deliver comprehensive care without billing families for individual services.

## Why Families Often Don’t Know About PACE

Despite being a federally established program, PACE is not widely known because:

- It is not available in every geographic area
- It is typically introduced late in the care journey
- Families often enter crisis care before learning about it
- It sits between home care and nursing home systems, making it less visible

Many families only discover PACE during what caregivers often describe as a “crisis or pressure phase”—when care needs escalate quickly and coordination becomes overwhelming.

## Official Sources

All program information is based on U.S. government sources:

- Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) – PACE Overview  
<https://www.cms.gov/medicare/medicaid-coordination/about/pace>
- Medicare.gov – PACE Program Details  
<https://www.medicare.gov/health-drug-plans/health-plans/your-coverage-options/other-medicare-health-plans/PACE>
- Medicaid.gov – PACE Benefits & Services  
<https://www.medicare.gov/medicaid/long-term-services-supports/pace/programs-all-inclusive-care-elderly-benefits>

## Disclaimer

This information is provided for educational and informational purposes only and is not intended as legal, financial, or medical advice. Eligibility, availability, and benefits of the PACE program vary by state and individual circumstances. Families should contact their local PACE organization, State Medicaid office, or Medicare representative to confirm eligibility and details specific to their situation.