

Federal and state law require the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) and local agencies to recover costs that Medical Assistance (MA) and General Assistance Medical Care (GAMC) paid for members under certain circumstances through estate recovery and liens on real property.

Estate Recovery

What is an estate?

An estate is the property that a person leaves behind after dying.

What is estate recovery?

Estate recovery is a process in which local agencies claim against the estates of some deceased MA members and all deceased GAMC members, or the estates of the deceased members' surviving spouses, to collect the amount MA, GAMC or both, paid for certain health care services.

Who recovers MA and GAMC costs using estate recovery?

County agencies file claims against estates to collect MA costs. DHS does not do estate recovery.

Whom Do Estate Recovery and Liens Apply to?

Estate recovery and liens apply to the following people:

- MA members who at 55 years old or older receive a subset of MA services called long-term services and supports (LTSS)
- MA members who at any age permanently reside in a medical institution and whose attending physician, advanced practice registered nurse (APRN), or physician assistant certifies in writing that the member is never expected to be discharged and return home
- GAMC members who received GAMC services at any age

Liens

What is a lien?

A lien is a legal right or interest that a person or entity has in another person's property until the claim has been repaid or the lien expires.

What is real property?

Real property is a specific type of property that includes land and buildings on land.

Who recovers MA and GAMC costs using liens on real property?

DHS files liens against real property interests to collect MA and GAMC costs. Unlike estate recovery, lien recovery is limited to collecting MA and GAMC costs from real property only. Local agencies do not file liens for MA or GAMC repayment.

Situation	Age when costs of services can be recovered later by estate claim or lien	Services for which costs can be recovered
Received MA services	55 years old or older	MA LTSS
Received MA services while permanently residing in a medical institution	Any age	All MA services received during the period of institutionalization
Received GAMC services	Any age	All GAMC services

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Purpose

Why do DHS and local agencies pursue estate recovery and liens?

DHS and local agencies are required by law to pursue estate recovery and liens so that there are funds to support future MA members. As stated by the Minnesota Supreme Court, estate recovery serves “a very important purpose . . . whereby money paid to qualified individuals for health care purposes may be recovered and reused to help other similarly situated persons.”

In re Estate of Turner, 391 N.W.2d 767, 770 (Minn. 1986).

Services for Which Costs Can Be Recovered

What are MA long-term services and supports (LTSS)?

For the purpose of MA recovery, LTSS are the following:

- Nursing facility services (NFS)
- Home and community-based services (HCBS)
 - Alternative Care (AC) services
 - Brain Injury (BI) services
 - Community Alternative Care (CAC) services
 - Community Access for Disability Inclusion (CADI) services
 - Developmental Disabilities (DD) services
 - Elderly Waiver (EW) services
 - Home health services
 - Home care nursing
 - Home health aide
 - Medical supplies and equipment
 - These services when provided by a home health agency:
 - Physical therapy
 - Occupational therapy
 - Speech therapy
 - Personal care assistance (PCA)
- Hospital and prescription drug services received during the period the MA member received NFS or HCBS

What are GAMC services?

General Assistance Medical Care (GAMC) was a public health care program in Minnesota that ended in 2011. People for whom GAMC paid health care costs received “GAMC services.”

Estate Recovery

What is a local agency and why do local agencies perform estate recovery instead of DHS?

A local agency is a Minnesota county agency or a tribal agency. Local agencies are responsible for estate recovery under law.

Can estate recovery happen before an MA or GAMC member dies?

No. Estate recovery happens after an MA or GAMC member dies.

Are there protections against estate recovery?

Yes. Local agencies delay recovery if the deceased MA or GAMC member is survived by a spouse or has a child who is under 21 years old, blind or permanently disabled. There are additional protections in certain circumstances. See “More Information” on the next page.

Can a local agency recover MA and GAMC costs from the estate of a spouse who survives an MA or GAMC member?

Yes. Local agencies must try to collect from the estate of a spouse of an MA or GAMC member who continued living after the member died, but only after the spouse has died. This delay is a safeguard for the spouse. Local agencies cannot recover on an MA or GAMC claim if a spouse survives the deceased MA or GAMC member.

If the surviving spouse receives assets from the deceased MA or GAMC member’s estate, the surviving spouse can use the assets without having to repay. But, once the surviving spouse dies, the local agency can claim against the surviving spouse’s estate.

Do children of an MA or GAMC member have to pay estate claims?

No. An MA member’s children do not have to use their own assets to reimburse local agencies for any services the member received.

FAQs Continued

Do estate claims recover the costs of MinnesotaCare?

No. Estate recovery is limited to the MA and GAMC programs.

Liens

Can DHS recover on a lien before an MA or GAMC member dies?

DHS can recover on a lien filed on an MA member's real property before an MA member dies, but recovery is limited to the costs of MA services the member received during a permanent stay in a medical institution.

However, a lien cannot recover the costs of MA LTSS received at 55 years old or older (outside of permanent institutionalization), nor the costs of GAMC services, until after the MA or GAMC member dies.

What has to happen before DHS can recover on a lien while an MA member is still alive?

There are a number of steps that occur before DHS can recover on a lien that is filed against real property owned by an MA member who is permanently institutionalized:

- DHS receives written verification from the MA member's treating physician, APRN or physician assistant that the member is never expected to be discharged and return home.
- DHS sends written notice about the lien to the MA member or the member's legal representative informing the member that he or she has an opportunity to have a hearing about the lien.
- DHS files the lien in the office of the county recorder or registrar of titles in the county where the property is located.
- All protections against lien recovery cease to apply.
- The MA member has resided in the institution for six months.
- A party other than DHS transfers or sells the property. DHS does not compel transfer or sale of real property to recover on a lien.

This process is in place to ensure proper lien filing and ensure the MA member, or the member's legal representative or both, are informed of the lien before recovery and have the opportunity to be heard.

Are there any protections against liens when the MA member is permanently living in an institution?

Yes. DHS cannot file a lien against the member's real property if the property is the home of the member's spouse. Also, DHS cannot file a lien if a child who is under 21 years old, blind or permanently disabled lives in the home. There are additional protections in certain circumstances. See "More Information" below.

Does DHS file liens against estates?

No. Because a deceased person's estate can include many assets that are not real property, DHS does not file liens against a person's "estate." DHS files liens only against real property that may or may not be included in a person's estate.

Does DHS file liens to recover the costs of MinnesotaCare?

No. Liens are limited to the MA and GAMC programs.

Planning for Estate Recovery and Liens

Can DHS or local agencies help me plan my estate?

No. DHS and local agencies cannot answer "What if...?" questions about estate recovery or liens. DHS and local agencies are government entities whose role prohibits them from giving legal advice to the public.

Who can answer my questions about estate planning?

Private attorneys and legal aid can answer your questions.

More Information

Where can I find more basic information?

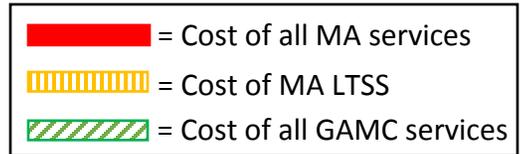
Go to <https://mn.gov/dhs/ma-estate-recovery/>

Where can I find more detailed information?

Visit the Eligibility Policy Manual for Minnesota Health Care Programs at https://hcopub.dhs.state.mn.us/epm/index_1.htm and read the entries for MA Estate Recovery (2.1.1.2.1.1) and MA Liens (2.1.1.2.1.2).

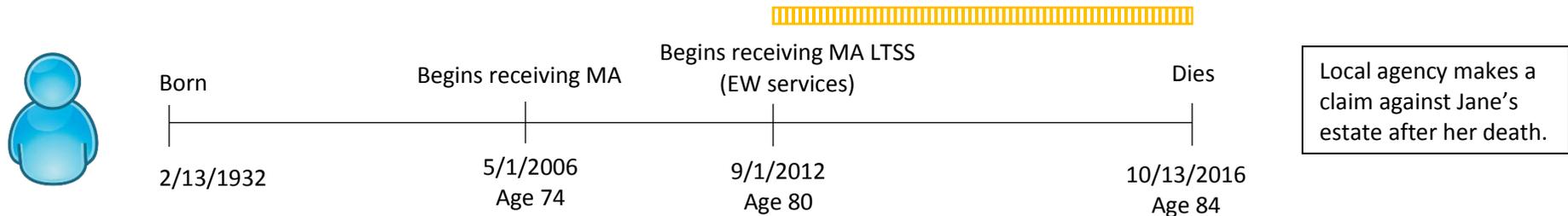
Examples and Explanations

The following examples and explanations demonstrate how estate recovery and liens are affected by an MA or GAMC member's age and the services the member receives. The colored bars show periods of time when costs of MA or GAMC services are counted for recovery.



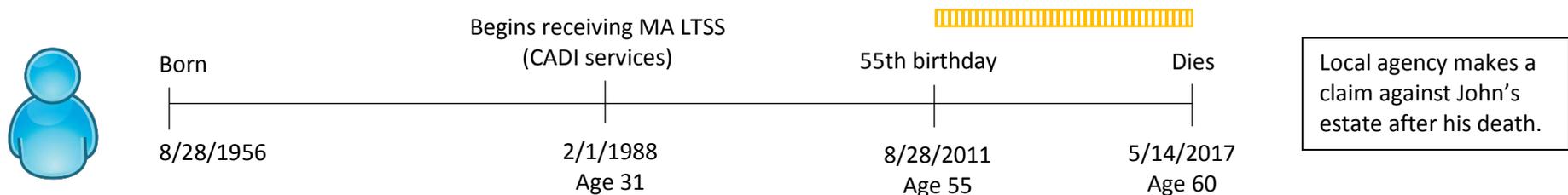
Estate Recovery

Example: Jane receives MA services other than LTSS when is 74 years old but later receives MA LTSS.



Explanation: Jane began receiving MA services other than LTSS after the age of 55. When she was 80 years old, she applied for and began receiving Elderly Waiver (EW) services, which is an MA program for people 65 years old and older who need the level of care provided in a nursing home but who choose to live in the community. Because EW services are home and community-based services, which are MA LTSS, the local agency can recover the cost of EW services Jane received from September 1, 2012, until death in an estate claim. The local agency can also recover the costs of any hospital services and prescription drugs that MA paid for while she received EW services. No recovery can be attempted during her lifetime.

Example: John receives MA LTSS before 55 years old and continues to receive MA LTSS until his death.



Explanation: At the age of 31, the sudden onset of a disability and lacking income and assets results in John applying for and receiving Community Access for Disability Inclusion (CADI) services. CADI services are home and community-based services, which are MA LTSS. Though John receives CADI services for 24 years before he turns 55 years old, the only period in his lifetime for which the costs of CADI services can be recovered in an estate claim are from his 55th birthday until his death at age 60. The local agency can also recover the costs of hospital services and prescription drugs that MA paid for while he received CADI services. No recovery can be attempted during his lifetime.

Estate Recovery Continued

- = Cost of all MA services
- = Cost of MA LTSS
- = Cost of all GAMC services

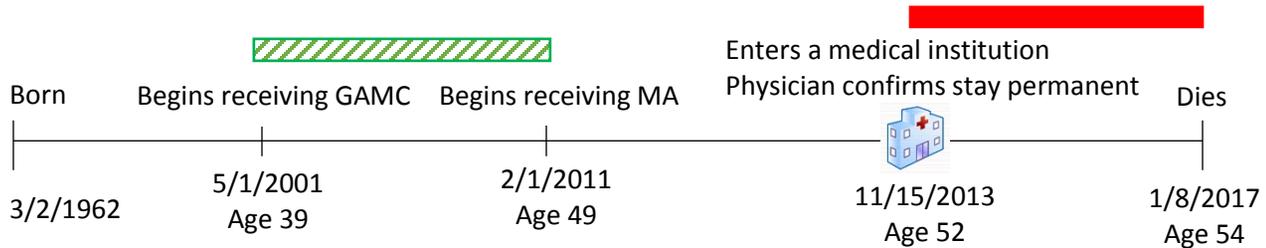
Example: Linda only receives MA services other than LTSS.



Local agency does **not** make a claim against Linda's estate after her death.

Explanation: Linda began receiving MA services other than LTSS and does not receive LTSS before her death. There is no claim against her estate.

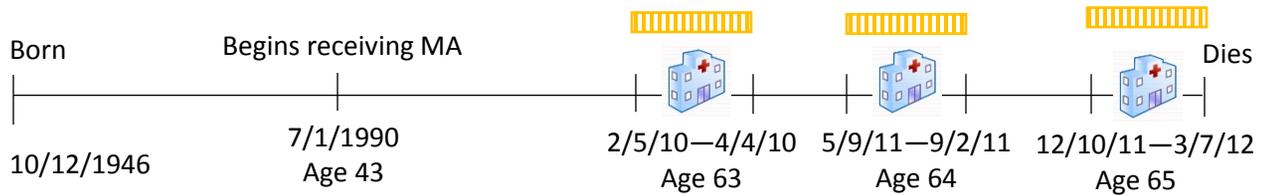
Example: Raul receives GAMC services, MA services other than LTSS, and later dies in a medical institution he permanently resided in.



Local agency makes a claim against Raul's estate after his death.

Explanation: Raul began receiving GAMC services when he was 39 years old and continued to until the program ended in 2011. At that time, he applied for and began receiving MA services other than LTSS. When he was 52 years old, Raul's health required him to enter a medical institution and stay there permanently. His treating physician at the institution certified in writing that Raul could not have reasonably been expected to be discharged and return home. Raul dies at 54 years old in the institution. The local agency can claim against Raul's estate for the cost of all GAMC services he received and the cost of all MA services he received during his permanent stay in the institution. If Raul had owned real property at the time of institutionalization, DHS recorded a lien against it, and the property sold before Raul died, then DHS (not the local agency) could recover during his lifetime for the cost of MA services during his institutionalization (see next page). Otherwise, no recovery can occur during his lifetime.

Example: Beatrice receives MA services other than LTSS and later goes into and out of a nursing facility several times before her death.

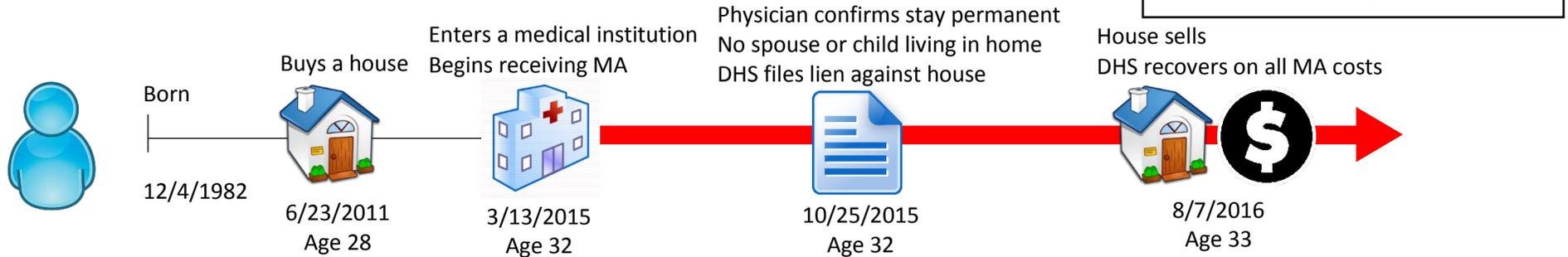


Local agency makes a claim against Beatrice's estate after her death.

Explanation: Beatrice received MA services other than LTSS up until she entered a nursing facility for a short-term stay at 63 years old. Nursing facility services (NFS) are LTSS. She stayed twice more at a nursing facility and she died during her final stay. The local agency can recover the costs of NFS she received and also costs of hospital and prescription drugs MA paid for while she received NFS. No recovery can occur during her lifetime.

Liens

Example: Frank has an accident and receives MA while permanently residing in a medical institution.

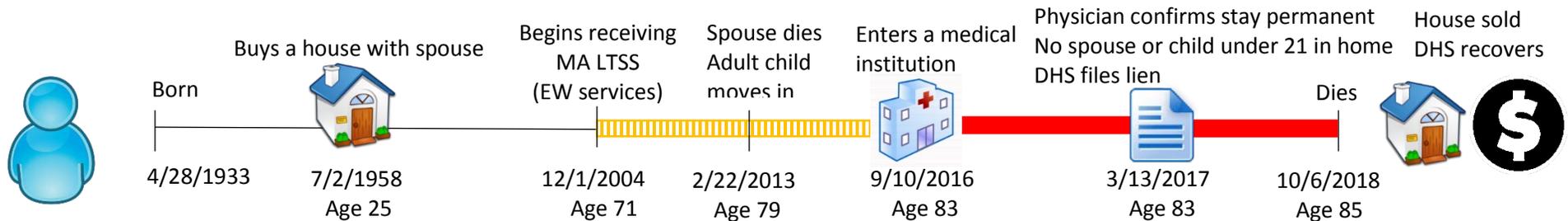


Explanation: Frank buys a house years before he suffers an accident that requires him to live in a medical institution for the rest of his life. Upon entering the medical institution in March 2015, he applies for and begins receiving MA services. In October 2015, DHS records a lien against Frank's house because all of the following statements are true:

- He has resided in a medical institution for at least six months.
- His physician certified that Frank could not reasonably be expected to leave the medical institution.
- He does not have: a spouse that lives in his house; any children who are under 21 years old, blind or permanently disabled who live in his house; a child who lived in his house for two years immediately before institutionalization who cared for him; or a sibling with an equity interest in Frank's house who lived there one year immediately before his institutionalization.

In August 2016, Frank's parents choose to sell his house. (DHS never compels the sale of a house to recover on a lien.) DHS collects the amount paid for all MA services Frank received up until the date the house is sold. Frank continues to live in the medical institution.

Example: Florence receives MA LTSS and later dies in a medical institution while permanently residing there.



Explanation: Florence and her spouse buy a house in 1958 and continue to live there after they retire. At 71 years old, Florence applies for and begins receiving EW services, which are MA LTSS. Eight years later, her spouse dies and her adult child moves in but does not attend to Florence's medical needs because she receives EW services. Then, at 83 years old, Florence needs the care of a nursing home, which is a medical institution, and permanently resides there. DHS properly files a lien (the child is over 21 years old). Florence dies and her child probates her estate and sells the house. DHS recovers the cost of MA LTSS she received up until her date of institutionalization and the cost of all MA services since that date.

