



Medicaid: Providing Enrollees with Access to Health Care

Medicaid

Medicaid is a state-federal partnership program that connects low-income Americans to the health care they need to get healthy and stay healthy. It provides comprehensive benefits that improve enrollees' health and their financial security. Medicaid serves working families, children, seniors, and people with disabilities.

Medicaid offers comprehensive health benefits.

All state Medicaid programs cover a set of standard health benefits ranging from physician services to inpatient hospital care.¹ States have the option of including additional benefits, like basic dental care and physical therapy. All states cover some optional benefits.

Medicaid gives enrollees access to preventive care.

Having access to preventive care is associated with better health.² In 2014, adults who had Medicaid for a full year reported having access to recommended preventive services at a rate on par with individuals with private insurance. And they were much more likely to have access to preventive care than people who were uninsured.³

Medicaid connects enrollees to a regular source of care.

Having a regular source of care is also associated with better health.⁴ In 2014, 95 percent of adults who had Medicaid for a full year reported having a regular doctor. That's comparable to the percent of people with private insurance (94 percent), and it's much better than the rate for people without insurance (77 percent).⁵

People with Medicaid are satisfied with their care.

Individuals with Medicaid report receiving excellent or very good care at the same rate as those with private insurance.⁶

Medicaid coverage is linked to lower rates of mortality.

A large-scale study of states that extended Medicaid before 2014 found that broader Medicaid coverage was associated with reductions in mortality, increased access to care, and improved reported health status.⁷

Medicaid coverage is linked to lower rates of depression.

With better access to health care and mental health professionals, as well as less financial strain, people with Medicaid report lower rates of depression than the uninsured.⁸

Medicaid has long-lasting benefits for children.

Children account for nearly half of all Medicaid enrollees. Medicaid helps them get a good start in life and succeed years later. Studies show that individuals who had Medicaid when they were young not only experienced better health while they were enrolled, but that they

actually earned more as adults than children who were uninsured.⁹ Each year of Medicaid enrollment was associated with an increase in income.

For children, Medicaid's benefits are both immediate and long-term.

Individuals with Medicaid have greater financial security.

Medicaid keeps out-of-pocket costs (like copayments) low so that enrollees can use the coverage they have.¹⁰ Compared to people who are uninsured, Medicaid enrollees are less likely to incur catastrophic health care costs, and they report feeling less financial strain.¹¹

Physicians' offices respond to Medicaid enrollees and the privately insured at about the same rate.

People with Medicaid report receiving same-day return calls from physician offices and getting same-day appointments when sick at roughly the same rate as people with private insurance.¹²

Medicaid has a record of improving access to health care and improving health for low-income Americans. It works well for the millions of people it serves.

Endnotes

1 Medicaid's required and optional state benefits are listed on the website Medicaid.Gov, which is operated by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). See also <http://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid-chip-program-information/by-topics/benefits/medicaid-benefits.html>.

2 Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, *Healthy People 2020 Leading Health Indicators: Clinical Preventive Services* (Washington: Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, May 2014), available online at http://www.healthypeople.gov/sites/default/files/HP2020_LHI_Clin_Prev_Srv_0.pdf.

3 P. W. Blumenthal et al., *Does Medicaid Make a Difference? Findings from the Commonwealth Fund Biennial Health Insurance Survey, 2014* (New York: The Commonwealth Fund, June 2015), available online at <http://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/issue-briefs/2015/jun/does-medicaid-make-a-difference>. The preventive services that were reported on were blood pressure screening, cholesterol screening, and flu vaccination.

4 John Saultz et al., "Interpersonal Continuity of Care and Care Outcomes," *Annals of Family Medicine* 205 (2005): 159-166, available online at <http://www.annfammed.org/content/3/2/159.short>.

5 P. W. Blumenthal et al., op. cit. This report is based on results from a large-scale national survey of individuals ages 19-64.

6 P. W. Blumenthal et al., op. cit. Fifty-five percent of survey respondents with Medicaid rated their care as "excellent" or "very good." For people with private insurance, the rate was 53 percent.

7 Benjamin Sommers et al., "Mortality and Access to Care among Adults after State Medicaid Expansions," *New England Journal of Medicine* 367 (2012): 1,025-1,034, available online at <http://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMsa1202099#t=article>.

8 Katherine Baicker et al., "The Oregon Experiment—Effects of Medicaid on Clinical Outcomes," *New England Journal of Medicine* 268 (2013): 1,713-1,722, available online at <http://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMsa1212321>.

9 David Brown et al., *Medicaid as an Investment in Children: What Is the Long-Term Impact on Tax Receipts?* (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, January 2015), available online at <http://www.nber.org/papers/w20835.pdf>.

10 P. W. Blumenthal et al., op. cit.

11 Katherine Baicker et al, op. cit.

12 P. W. Blumenthal et al., op. cit. Fifty-three percent of survey respondents who were covered through Medicaid were able to get a same-day appointment when sick, and 75 percent received a same-day return call. For consumers with private insurance, the rates were 58 and 80 percent, respectively.

A selected list of relevant publications to date:

Medicaid: Connecting Low-Income Seniors and People with Disabilities to Health and Long-Term Care (July 2015)

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