

Medicaid Expansion Makes Sense: Implementation Message Guide

Prepared by Missouri Foundation for Health

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In August 2020, Missouri voters approved a ballot initiative to expand Medicaid. The state must now implement the ballot initiative, which calls for new Medicaid eligibility rules to be put into the state constitution. Implementation will require several months of work, including operational changes and back and forth with federal officials, before new rules are in effect and expanded coverage begins. This message guide is designed to give you information and talking points that may be useful to reinforce why Medicaid Expansion makes sense in Missouri. This guide is informed by research commissioned by Missouri Foundation for Health.

Message Frame

Missourians are counting down the months to when they can access health insurance thanks to the expansion of Missouri's Medicaid program, MO HealthNet. It is time for all of us to work together so that by summer 2021 our Medicaid program will be equipped to help more individuals and families across the state get the peace of mind and financial security they need to stay healthy and get back on their feet. For example, by expanding Medicaid, an individual who makes less than \$18,000 per year will be eligible for the first time. Expanding Medicaid will bring our taxpayer dollars back home, help keep rural hospitals open, and create jobs. **No matter how you look at it, expanding Medicaid in Missouri just makes sense.**

What's Next?

- Missouri voters have made clear that we must move forward to expand Medicaid for the health of our communities and the health of our economy. Voters from across the state and across party lines supported the measure because they know that Medicaid expansion will be an important way to help Missourians through tough times, providing access to health insurance to get and stay healthy, remain in the workforce, and support their families.
- State officials are moving forward to expand Medicaid by summer 2021. Over the next few months, the state will work with federal officials to approve new rules that expand Medicaid eligibility for individuals and families and update internal systems to be able to enroll newly eligible Missourians.

Federal Government Will Pay 90% of Medicaid Expansion Costs

- After Missouri's new rules are approved, the federal government will cover 90% of the costs to expand Missouri's Medicaid program, bringing hard-earned Missouri tax dollars back home. This commitment is written into law and guarantees the funds will come to Missouri. These are funds that Missourians have already paid into through federal taxes. Missourians deserve for this money to be used in Missouri.
- Federal funds are estimated to save our state \$39 million in the first year of expansion, bringing tax dollars back home to help Missouri.

- Expanding Missouri's Medicaid program, MO HealthNet, will bring much needed federal funding into our state. This will free up limited state funding to cover other priority areas including schools, public safety, and small businesses.

Medicaid Expansion Will Help Grow Our Economy

- We continue to feel the economic fallout caused by COVID-19. Many Missouri businesses have closed, and workers have lost jobs or had their hours, wages, or benefits cut. Medicaid provides health insurance to help people in crisis. An expanded Medicaid program will ensure that more hard-working Missourians can get the health coverage they need to get them back on their feet.
- Research shows that expanding the Medicaid program will create over 16,000 new jobs per year, and 79% will be outside of the health care industry. At a time when Missouri is facing record unemployment, job growth from Medicaid expansion would provide stability for workers looking for ways to take care of themselves and their families.
- Research shows expanding Missouri's Medicaid program, MO HealthNet, will benefit our state economy. It is estimated the economic output will increase by \$2.5 billion and personal income will increase by \$1.1 billion every year between 2022 and 2026. Especially as we continue to respond to the economic aftermath caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, any measure to kickstart our economy is critical.

Medicaid Expansion Will Keep Health Care Costs Down for Everyone

- When an uninsured Missourian goes to the emergency room, taxpayers often foot the bill which means higher insurance premiums for everyone and tax dollars diverted from other priorities. Now that we've voted to expand our Medicaid program, more Missourians will have access to treatment and preventive care, keeping health care costs down for everyone.
- Research shows expanding Medicaid will reduce uninsured visits to the doctor by more than 50%.

Medicaid Expansion Will Improve Health and Access to Care

- When people are uninsured, they are less likely to seek care if they are sick. Ensuring Missourians have access to affordable health insurance is a matter of life and death, especially in the wake of COVID-19. Our entire state benefits when everyone has access to treatment and care.
- Having health insurance allows Missourians to access preventive care so conditions can be managed. This prevents people from getting so sick that they cannot work and support their families.
- More than 30% of Missourians live in rural communities. Seven rural hospitals have closed recently. Expanding Missouri's Medicaid program, MO HealthNet, will help keep rural hospitals and clinics open, providing critical care for families throughout our state.

Medicaid Expansion Will Close the Coverage Gap

- Before the COVID-19 pandemic led to high levels of job loss and insecurity, approximately 230,000 hard-working Missourians were expected to gain health insurance through Medicaid expansion. These are people who make too much money to qualify for Medicaid now but don't make enough to afford private health insurance and aren't offered coverage through their jobs. These residents do not have any realistic options to get health insurance that would help them get and stay healthy, go to work, and support their families.
- The Medicaid program helps our friends and neighbors who don't get health insurance through their jobs and can't afford to buy it on their own. This includes people like restaurant servers, construction workers, retail workers, and farmers, to name only a few. It also provides temporary help for people who lose a job or become too sick to work. Medicaid helps Missourians get through tough times and

offers financial protection for working families, so they don't go bankrupt when they face an unexpected illness or need to go to the hospital.

- Research shows that when parents have health insurance, their kids are more likely to be insured. Medicaid expansion will protect Missouri's working families, including thousands of uninsured veterans, so they do not have to choose between paying their rent or filling a prescription.

Frequently Asked Questions

Use these frequently asked questions and answers to address additional topics that may be relevant to your community or the populations you serve. If you have questions about Medicaid expansion or Missouri Foundation For Health, contact Nancy Kelley (nkelley@mffh.org).

What is Medicaid?

- Today, Missouri's Medicaid program, known as MO HealthNet, provides health insurance for low-income children and parents, seniors, pregnant women, and people with disabilities. It allows Missourians to see a doctor when they are sick, get check-ups, buy medications, and go to the hospital. Having health insurance allows Missourians to maintain their health, go to work, and take care of their families.
- Currently in Missouri, a non-disabled adult with children can qualify for Medicaid if their income is below 22% of the federal poverty line. This equates to less than \$5,550 a year for a family of four. Adults who are not parents are not eligible at all. But all this will change once Medicaid expansion is in place in the summer of 2021. At that time, individuals who earn up to about \$18,000 per year, and families of four who earn up to \$36,000, will be eligible for coverage.
- Medicaid supports local hospitals, clinics, doctors, and schools so they can provide health services in their communities.

What is Medicaid expansion?

- Missourians voted in August 2020 to expand eligibility for Medicaid up to 138% of the federal poverty level. With expansion, an individual who earns less than \$18,000 per year or a family of four that earns less than \$36,000, will be eligible starting in the summer of 2021.
- Expanding Medicaid will provide health insurance coverage to 230,000 Missourians who are now caught in a coverage gap – they earn too much to qualify for the current Medicaid program but not enough to afford private insurance.

How is Missouri going to pay for expanding the Medicaid program?

- By law, the federal government will cover 90% of the costs to expand Missouri's Medicaid program. Expanding Medicaid will bring hard-earned Missouri tax dollars back home and free up state funding to cover other priorities like schools, public safety, and small businesses.
- Medicaid expansion will simplify our state's Medicaid program, creating a more cost-effective system that will allow federal dollars to replace state funds, saving Missouri \$39 million in the first year of expansion.

Is Medicaid effective?

- MO HealthNet provides health insurance for many hard-working Missourians, including 550,000 children, as well as seniors in nursing homes and people with disabilities. It allows people to go to the doctor, get screenings and preventive care, prescriptions, and emergency care so they can take care of themselves and their families.
- Data shows health outcomes for Medicaid beneficiaries are much better than Missourians who are uninsured. This means Missourians can get and stay healthy, go to work, and support their families.
- Increased federal dollars will enable our state's Medicaid program to provide coverage to uninsured Missourians and infuse the program with resources to keep rural hospitals open. These funds will enable the state to modernize systems and improve efficiencies to make the best use of taxpayer dollars.

Does Medicaid help people work?

- Medicaid coverage supports work. People who are healthy are better able to get and keep jobs. Research in states that have already expanded Medicaid shows that those who receive coverage perform better at their jobs. In fact, most adults on Medicaid are working in full or part time jobs that don't provide health insurance or are caregivers or students.
- Health insurance provides financial security for Missourians so they can work, contribute to their communities, and take care of themselves and their families.

How do we ensure people who really need Medicaid can get it?

- Medicaid is a lifeline for hard-working Missourians to get and stay healthy, go to work, take care of their families, and pay their bills. There are processes in place to ensure those who enroll in Medicaid are rightfully eligible to receive the benefits.

How will Medicaid expansion benefit rural areas of the state?

- More than 30% of Missourians live in rural communities. Seven rural hospitals have closed recently. Medicaid expansion will help keep rural hospitals and clinics open, providing critical care for families throughout our state.
- According to projections, nearly 64% of new jobs created by Medicaid expansion will be outside of the St. Louis and Kansas City areas, meaning economic benefits for the whole state.

Are there enough providers to support the increased demand for care if we expand Medicaid?

- By providing coverage to uninsured Missourians, Medicaid expansion will reduce uncompensated care and bring more revenue to clinics and hospitals, helping to keep them open and recruit new providers.

Have other states expanded their Medicaid programs?

- Thirty-seven states, including Arkansas, Iowa, and Kentucky, have done the math and chosen to expand their Medicaid programs. Across the board, states have seen positive outcomes from Medicaid expansion as more people gain access to needed treatment and care, hospitals stay open, and jobs and the economy grow. No state that has expanded Medicaid has changed course.