Tennessee Takes Step Toward Medicaid Coverage of Doula Care

On May 11, Governor Bill Lee signed Senate Bill 0394, establishing a doula services advisory committee within TennCare. This 5-person committee will be tasked with defining core competencies and standards for doula services in Tennessee as well as recommending adequate reimbursement rates and fee schedules for TennCare. The committee will be comprised of the Commissioner of Health (or her designee), the Director of TennCare (or his designee), and three doulas. Of the doulas, two must be community-based and have experience serving Medicaid recipients in areas of the state with high maternal and infant mortality rates. The law will go into effect on July 1, 2023.

SB 0394 is one of three bills that were introduced in January 2023 in response to last year’s effort by Rep. London Lamar (D-Memphis) to expand TennCare beneficiaries’ access to doula care. In January 2022, Rep. Lamar sponsored SB 2150 which required the Department of Health and TennCare to study doula certification programs with input from various state organizations. In response to this mandate, Healthy and Free Tennessee released a report in October 2022 outlining policy recommendations aimed at improving maternal and infant health, notably including Medicaid coverage of doula care. In January 2023, Rep. Lamar introduced SB 0128, SB 0187, and SB 0394, all targeting TennCare coverage of doula services.

Expanding Medicaid coverage to include doula services has been a primary focus for several legal and advocacy organizations due to doulas’ ability to mitigate racial disparities. Studies have shown that doulas reduce pregnancy-related complications and mortality, particularly among Black women. In Tennessee, Black women are nearly four times more likely to die during childbirth than white women. For this reason, SB 0394 is an important step to ensuring pregnant and postpartum women receive necessary medical care.
IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

Enrollment Fair at Oasis Center

On May 12, client advocates visited the Oasis Center to speak to youth about TennCare. Ultimately, this event underscored the importance of Medicaid expansion for low-income young adults. Most event participants were 18- to 24-year-olds with no kids and no access to private insurance due to their parents being uninsured. Because Tennessee has not expanded Medicaid, these individuals do not qualify for TennCare despite their low incomes. The event served as a reminder of the necessity of safety net programs, such as Medicaid, for people trying to break the cycle of poverty.

Napier Day Parade and Block Party
On June 10, TJC participated in and sponsored the Napier Day Parade and Block Party. The event was led by the Black Mental Health Village and featured a variety of nonprofits. During the event, we toured the murals of Nashville activists at the new TJC building and educated the public on the contributions of the leaders featured in the murals. It was a great day to come together and celebrate the community with music, food, and activities.

Partner with Insure Our Kids!

Insure Our Kids is a coalition bringing together the medical community and non-profit organizations to discuss policy and healthcare issues. Please join us! We need your voice! Take our partner survey here.
On April 26, House Republicans passed a debt ceiling bill (HR 2811, the Limit, Save, Grow Act of 2023) which would have imposed work requirements for some individuals ages 19 to 55 years old to keep Medicaid coverage. The Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) estimated 550,000 Tennesseans would be subject to these new requirements. Studies show more than 90% of individuals on Medicaid do work, however, KFF estimates 1.5 million Americans would lose coverage under this policy largely due to the administrative difficulty of verifying employment. On May 28, work requirements for Medicaid were gutted from the bill, but requirements for other safety net programs such as SNAP and TANF remained in the version that was signed into law by President Biden. Click here to listen to King Nutrition Fellow Anna Luttrell speak about the dangers of this policy.

Supreme Court Upholds Rights of Medicaid Beneficiaries in Talevski Decision

On June 8, the Supreme Court upheld individuals’ right to sue when state officials violate their rights under the Medicaid Act. The decision affirms individuals’ ability to enforce their rights under Section 1983 of the Civil Rights Act of 1871. This victory is a relief to advocates for Medicaid beneficiaries (as well as other spending clause programs such as SNAP and public housing), for without this decision, Medicaid rights would go virtually unenforced. Inevitably, state agencies will fail to meet federal requirements, thus causing harm to beneficiaries. When this happens, it is critical that these individuals can seek legal recourse as protection against ongoing harm. Medicaid recipients are low-income and often have disabilities. This Supreme Court’s ruling ensures that advocates can continue to use Section 1983 to protect the rights of society’s most marginalized groups.

USDA Selects Tennessee in 4th Round of Direct Certification Project

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service announced Tennessee was selected as one of 14 states to participate in the 2023-2024 Direct Certification with Medicaid (DC-M) pilot program. DC-M aims to streamline the eligibility process for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program by using Medicaid files, thus eliminating the need for an application.
Starting July 1, children on TennCare living at or below 130 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) will qualify for free school meals, and those at or below 185 percent FPL will qualify for reduced school meals.

To read the full policy from USDA, click here.

Update TennCare if Your Address Has Changed!

Redeterminations began April 1! During the last redetermination period, 128,000 children lost coverage, many despite remaining eligible. To avoid disenrollment for eligible children, it is important that TennCare has enrollees’ current address information.

If your address has changed, call TennCare at 1-855-259-0701 or make a change to your account online through the TennCare Connect portal.

PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

Help Tennesseans Keep Their Health Coverage!

Tennessee has begun the year-long process of deciding which people can keep their health coverage under the TennCare or CoverKids programs. Over a million Tennesseans face a threat to their health care. Without help, hundreds of thousands — most of whom are children or adults with disabilities — will lose access to care. Individuals, organizations and businesses are needed to help fellow Tennesseans get through this process.

Call for Volunteers

Volunteers are needed to help individuals who cannot complete the process on their own. In the best traditions of the Volunteer State, all are invited to collaborate in a coordinated effort to help our neighbors. If you are interested in providing direct volunteer work with our organization, please sign up here.

Ways to Keep Your Health Coverage!

If you are on TennCare, you may get a packet from TennCare saying they need updated information. This packet will probably be sent to you this year by mail. If you don’t respond you might lose your TennCare or CoverKids health insurance.

What should you do right now?
Make sure TennCare has your correct address. You can do this online through your TennCare Connect portal (https://tenncareconnect.tn.gov) or by calling TennCare Connect at 855-259-0701.

What should you do when you get the packet?
Fill it out and send it to TennCare as soon as you get it. Directions on where to send it will be in the packet. It is a good idea to keep proof that you sent it. For example, if you fax it, keep the fax receipt. If you need help filling out the packet, call us at (615) 255-0331.
If you believe you received this message in error or wish to no longer receive email from us, please (Unsubscribing is not supported in previews).