CMS Proposes Rule Change to Expand Health Coverage to DACA Recipients

On April 24, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) proposed a rule that, if finalized, would expand coverage options for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program (DACA) recipients. The rule would apply to plans through the Health Insurance Marketplace, Medicaid, and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

The proposed rule looks to amend the definition of “lawful presence” to include DACA recipients (also known as Dreamers). This, in effect, would expand eligibility for coverage to include Dreamers. From there, their eligibility for coverage would be assessed just like any other lawfully present person (using markers such as age, income, resources, etc.). Similarly, they could then also qualify for cost-sharing reductions on Marketplace plans. If finalized as proposed, Dreamers would qualify for a 60-day Special Enrollment Period once enacted. Nationally, CMS estimates this change would result in 129,000 previously uninsured DACA recipients becoming eligible for health coverage.

In Tennessee, however, Dreamers will be subjected to a 5-year waiting period due to the state’s failure to enact Section 214 of the Children’s Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2009 (CHIPRA). In 1996, Congress imposed a 5-year waiting period on certain immigrant groups who otherwise would qualify for Medicaid. Section 214 of CHIPRA amended that decision, permitting states to remove the 5-year bar and use federal funding to cover children and pregnant women through Medicaid and CHIP programs. Tennessee is one of only 15 states that has not taken advantage of this policy.

CMS is requesting public comment on the proposed rule, specifically on whether the proposed effective date of November 1 is feasible for states.

Click here to read the full factsheet from CMS.
TennCare Redeterminations: Call to Collaborate Webinar

We have officially wrapped our 5-part webinar series on TennCare redeterminations. On April 19, we discussed the ins and outs of the TennCare Connect portal and how to complete the renewal packet online. On May 9, we concluded the series by reviewing accommodations available to folks going through the renewal process. Thanks to everyone who joined. These webinars are available for free through our training hub. If you would like to connect with TJC in the future, please contact Casework Supervisor, Diana Gallaher, at dgallaher@tnjustice.org or Outreach Coordinator, Shana Watkins, at swatkins@tnjustice.org.

Community Clean Up

On April 28, volunteers from HCA Healthcare and Midtown Fellowship joined TJC for a landscaping day at our new building. In addition to adding some greenery, we also picked up trash in the surrounding community. Thank you to all the volunteers who helped make this event a success!
Medical Mission at Home

On April 29, TJC attended Medical Mission at Home, an event hosted by Ascension Saint Thomas Hospital. The annual event aims to deliver free medical care and resources to community members who typically have limited access to care. In total, advocates from TJC spoke to 70+ people about TennCare and Marketplace options and, when eligible, applied for them on-site. Additionally, volunteers collected stories from numerous community members who fell in the Coverage Gap and informed them about the importance of Medicaid expansion.

TJC Day of Giving

On May 10, TJC hosted its own Day of Giving, a 24-hour virtual fundraiser aimed at raising $20,000. Thank you to everyone who donated. We raised $15,531.38 in unmatched donations for a total of $48,531.38 after matching. Your generosity will help us continue in our fight to secure vital health coverage and food benefits for Tennesseans.
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.

Follow Insure Our Kids on Facebook and e-mail Shana Watkins to learn more about the Insure Our Kids coalition.

---

TJC in the News

- State asking families to repay pandemic-related SNAP benefits after error
- TN Justice Center – SNAP Benefit Repayments
- TennCare begins renewal process to return to pre-pandemic enrollment

---

FEDERAL UPDATES

Arkansas Sees 85% Procedural Disenrollment Rate in First Phase of Redeterminations

Arkansas recently released data indicating that in the first phase of its redeterminations process, an alarming 85% of terminations have been procedural. This means nearly 62,000 enrollees have been terminated not because they are ineligible but rather due to administrative issues such as failure to return a renewal form or inability to locate an enrollee. Additionally, 40% of the nearly 73,000 Arkansas residents who have lost coverage are children.

Arkansas, like Tennessee, has expressed the intention to return to pre-pandemic enrollment numbers. This goal is fundamentally flawed because some people were eligible but not enrolled in TennCare prior to the public health emergency. In an interview with the Nashville Post, Executive Director Michele Johnson stated the goal should not be to lessen the number of people on TennCare but rather to ensure the number of enrollees reflects the need of Tennesseans.

Click here to read Michele’s interview with the Nashville Post.

---

TN UPDATES

Tennessee Expands Coverage Under TennCare With Passage of 2023-2024 Budget
On April 21, Tennessee passed Governor Bill Lee’s $56.2 billion budget which included $330 million for TennCare programs. This funding will expand the Caretaker Relative, Children, and Pregnant Women categories within TennCare, which is estimated to result in coverage for an additional 8,100 parents, 10,000 children, 2,400 pregnant women, and 3,000 postpartum women each year. Additionally, it will cover the cost of diapers for two years for babies who are born to mothers on TennCare, making Tennessee the first state to offer such a program. The policy changes presented in the budget are expected to take effect early next year.

Click here to read the full budget.

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 will soon start a year-long process to decide 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.