

Children's Champion

January 8, 2019 • Vol. 26 • Tennessee Justice Center

Instead of starting 2019 on a high note, we are unfortunately dealing with a problematic refrain from 2018.

TennCare has officially submitted [their demonstration to add work reporting requirements](#) as a condition of eligibility for certain enrollees age 19-64 who are enrolled in the parent/caretaker relative eligibility group.

Join us for a webinar next Thursday, January 17 at 11:30 AM CT/12:30 PM ET for more information on the work reporting requirements proposal and how to submit comments.

[REGISTER HERE](#)

We wrote about this [harmful proposal](#) during the state comment period in October. We want to reiterate:

- **This proposal is a solution in search of a problem.** The TN legislature passed a bill this past spring which prompted TennCare to submit this work requirements proposal. According to the official fiscal note for the bill, the proposal is targeted at a mere 2.8% of people on TennCare. Administering the proposal will require the state to spend more money to cover fewer people. The General Assembly anticipates taking funds from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program to administer the work requirements.
- **This proposal will create an expensive bureaucratic mess that will jeopardize coverage for hundreds of thousands of people.** Although the elaborate bureaucratic apparatus the proposal creates is targeted at only 2.8% of TennCare enrollees, it will affect hundreds of thousands of people who will be subject to burdensome reporting

requirements. Though eligible, they will be at risk of losing their coverage because of bureaucratic errors and the state's well-documented difficulties reliably processing eligibility information.

- **Your comments matter!** The federal comment period is open from January 8, 2019 to February 7, 2019. Comments were integral to stopping implementation of the work reporting requirements in Kentucky, and we know we can do the same here!

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INSURE OUR KIDS UPDATES

Please continue to share our updated Insure Our Kids videos!

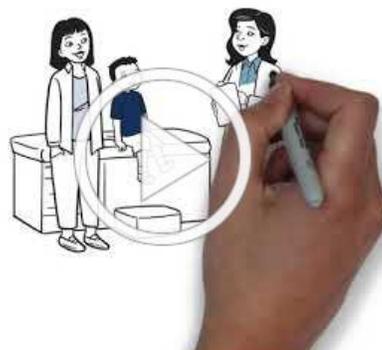


- Hospital visits

Your children may be eligible for free or low-cost health insurance.



[Insure Our Kids video for parents](#)



If you need help applying for TennCare and CoverKids, call **1-844-478-KIDS (5437)**.

If you have already applied and been denied, call the Tennessee Justice Center at **1-877-608-1009** to get free help to file an appeal.



ICYMI



TJC led a "Witness for Healthcare" on January 7th. Nearly 200 people gathered in Nashville's Legislative Plaza to call on our legislature to address Tennessee's urgent health care needs, like the over 300,000 Tennesseans in the coverage gap, rural hospital closures, and rising health care costs. You can view more photos of the event [here](#).

Texas v. Azar ruling

Republican officials in Tennessee and 19 other states filed suit in Texas to challenge the constitutionality of the whole Affordable Care Act (ACA), specifically targeting the provisions protecting people from discrimination by insurance companies based on their pre-existing conditions. The Justice Department refused to defend those provisions. On Friday, December 14, a federal judge in Texas [ruled](#) not only that protections for people with pre-existing must fall but also the entire law.

If a higher court upholds the ruling, it will:

- Strip away the protections for more than 130 million people with pre-existing conditions.
- Eliminate other consumer protections, including prohibitions on charging women or older adults more, bans on annual and lifetime limits, and requirements that plans cover essential health benefits like prescription drugs and hospitalization.
- Take away insurance subsidies that make insurance affordable for millions of families.
- Eliminate coverage for 15 million adults in states that have expanded Medicaid.
- Disallow children to stay on their parents' insurance until 26.
- Eliminate free annual wellness exams.
- Increase costs and reduce protections for families who get health insurance through their jobs.

Nothing is likely to change until the case is decided on appeal, which could be more than a year away. In the meantime, there is an urgent need for Congress to protect the hundreds of millions of Americans whose health care is now at grave risk.

Preventing Maternal Deaths Act

The Preventing Maternal Deaths Act is a bipartisan bill that authorizes \$12 million a year in new funds for five years - an unprecedented level of federal support - for states to create review committees tasked with identifying maternal deaths, analyzing the factors that contributed to those deaths and translating the lessons into policy changes. Both the House and Senate unanimously passed versions of the bill, and it was sent to the President for signature on December 13, 2018.

This is a great step in the right direction to the growing epidemic of mothers - especially mothers of color - dying because of childbirth that we wrote about in [our infant and maternal mortality policy brief](#).

THE MORE YOU KNOW



Maternity Care Deserts

Tennessee Justice Center staff recently visited McKenzie, Tennessee, where the closure of McKenzie Regional Hospital in September 2018 has had a major effect.

Now, pregnant women have to travel over an hour to Jackson to reach the closest hospital that delivers babies.

We know that mothers and babies are dying at higher rates because of complications associated with childbirth, which is caused in part by [maternity care deserts](#). Maternity care deserts are typically defined as a county in which access to maternity health care services is limited or absent, either through lack of services or barriers to a woman's ability to access that care.

Our increase in hospital closures and high rates of uninsured people in rural areas, both due in large part to our state's decision not to accept federal Medicaid dollars, has long-lasting ripple effects on the ability of families to thrive in Tennessee.

Stay tuned - we are releasing the video we made about the consequences of the closure of McKenzie Regional Hospital on Monday, January 14th.

LOOKING FORWARD

Federal level:

- The partial government shutdown does not directly impact the Medicaid and CHIP programs, as they are funded through September 30, 2019. Georgetown Center for Children and Families [writes](#) about the broader effects of the partial shutdown and what could happen in October.

State level:

- TennCare has started using the Tennessee Eligibility Determination System (TEDS) to administer CoverKids, Tennessee's CHIP program. Through the experience of our caseworkers and community partners, we are starting to identify issues with the new determination system. If you would like to share your experience with TEDS, please let us know by replying to this email.
- The State Legislature's session started Tuesday, January 8th. We are advocating that the legislators focus this session on addressing the urgent healthcare needs of Tennesseans, which include access to coverage, rising health care costs, pre-existing condition and other consumer protections, substance abuse disorders, rural health, and maternal health.

JOIN US

Work Reporting Requirements Webinar

Thursday, January 17th
11:30 AM CT/12:30 PM ET

Join us for a webinar to provide more information on the work reporting requirements proposal and how to submit comments.

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Awake Tennessee's 2019 Kickoff



Advocates for Women's
And Kids' Equality

What: 2019 Kickoff *and* Advocacy Training
When: Thursday, January 24th, 5:30-7:30pm
Where: Midtown Police Precinct (1441 12th Avenue S. Nashville)
Why: Achieve progress for women and kids!

Spread the word on [Facebook](#). Everyone is welcome!

[RSVP HERE](#)

As a reminder, the Tennessee Justice Center also helps with:

1. Enrollment onto TennCare and CoverKids
2. Service Issues
3. Redetermination Issues

If you ever encounter anyone who is having trouble getting health insurance or getting health services, please call TJC: (615) 255-0331.

If there is any information you would like us to share on your behalf, including events and resources, please reply to this email.

Sincerely,

Kinika Young
Director of Children's Health
kyoung@tnjustice.org



STAY CONNECTED:



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