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Children's Champion

• December 11, 2019 •
Tennessee Justice Center

The federal comment period for Tennessee's proposal to convert TennCare into a "block grant" is now open! Tennessee is the first state to seek this risky Medicaid financing model. This change puts all TennCare patients and services at risk and will only worsen existing health crises we have seen in our state.

Please take a few minutes to [fill out this survey](#) to comment against this dangerous proposal. The law requires that the federal government consider and alter their proposal based on concerns raised, so your voice can make a real difference.

The deadline to comment is December 27th, so please take a moment before your holiday break and [comment today!](#)

ICYMI

- **Uninsured children** - According Georgetown Center for Children and Families' new [report](#), **Tennessee saw a 46.2% increase in the number of uninsured children under 6 from 2016-2018**. Nationally, the number of uninsured babies, toddlers and preschool-aged children rose back up over one million children in 2018. This coverage reversal is especially troubling given the crucial period of development in the years well before children begin school. Health care coverage is key to ensuring young children receive the more frequent pediatrician-recommended checkups and screenings that can set them on a trajectory for success well into adulthood.
- **Public charge** - Our Children's Health intern, Kerry Keitzman, wrote a [blog post](#) highlighting the incredibly harmful public charge rule that affects immigrant families. The public charge rule essentially determines who has the right to immigrate to the United States and receive a visa or

green card. In the past, the only benefits considered in determining whether a person becomes a "public charge" were based on 1) cash assistance for income maintenance, and 2) government-funded long-term institutional care. A new rule was proposed which added food assistance programs, federal public housing and Section 8, and Medicaid (with exceptions) to the list. Although implementation of the rule has been stayed through litigation, families are pulling out of these programs because of the "chilling effect" out of fear of negative consequences from the government. It is a cruel attack on vulnerable, immigrant families and the Tennessee Justice Center stands with the immigrant community in opposing the proposed rule change.

- **Trouble enrolling or getting services for people with IDD** – Our George Barrett Social Justice Fellow, Vanessa Zapata, wrote a [blog post](#) about common problems with enrolling or getting services from TennCare for people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD). TennCare fortunately offers programs that enable children and adults with IDD to live full and supported lives – either at home or independently. However, there has been some difficulty in applying and receiving those programs and benefits. The Tennessee Justice is here to help during the struggle.

Please keep in mind that due to the limited funding that TennCare receives, not everyone who is enrolled gets services right away. And even if the Tennessee Justice Center is not taking new cases, we may still be able to help. Please contact Vanessa at 615-846-4714.

THE MORE YOU KNOW



Federal comment period for the Medicaid block grant proposal ends December 27

In the last couple of months, Tennesseans across the state joined together to oppose the harmful Medicaid block grant proposal that is facing Tennessee. However, there is more work to do as the federal comment period is open from Nov. 27 to Dec. 27.

Tennessee has submitted a proposal to CMS to convert the core of its Medicaid program into a block grant. The proposal, which the state characterizes as an "amendment" to its existing 1115 demonstration (TennCare II), is available [here](#). The federal comment period is open until December 27 at 11:00 p.m.

We have identified [six major problems](#) in the proposal. For background on the state's troubled history with Medicaid, read more [here](#) and [here](#).

On Sept. 17, the state revealed the block grant proposal that was formulated by TennCare in secret. The release of the proposal draft came with a mandatory state public comment period which lasted for 30 days. Individual Tennesseans and organizations committed their time and energy to fight back

against this proposal as it will be incredibly damaging to people across the state. With everyone's help, we submitted over 1,000 public comments! After being obligated to review and consider these comments (failure to do so could mean the proposal gets overturned), the state submitted a revised version of the proposal to the federal government.

The federal comment period opened on Nov. 27 and will end on Dec. 27. The federal government is required to consider all public comments before approving a proposal. After the federal government has given their stamp of approval on the block grant proposal (most likely in 2020), Tennessee has 30 days to respond. The Tennessee Legislature will have to take a vote on whether to approve the finalized Medicaid block grant waiver. Because of this, public comments on the proposal are so important! Thanks to public comments, the Medicaid work reporting requirements proposal in Kentucky was stopped.

Tennesseans can help win this fight and we must show Governor Lee, and federal officials, that implementing a block grant would be detrimental to peoples' health across the state and other states who may follow.

Get involved by visiting www.tnjustice.org/blockgrant or texting "JUSTICE4TN" to 52886.

LOOKING FORWARD

Federal updates

- **ACA Open Enrollment** - The ACA open enrollment for Marketplace plans closes this Sunday, December 15th. Applications are submitted through healthcare.gov. You'd be surprised that 8 in 10 people applying qualify for financial assistance, and many have zero premiums.

State updates

- **Medicaid block grant proposal** - Make sure to visit www.tnjustice.org/blockgrant for more information about the block grant. You can comment directly to www.tnjustice.org/stoptheblock.

JOIN US

Block Grant Twitter Chat

December 17th

11 am CT -12 pm CT

Follow the hashtag #StopTheBlock and join our Q&A about the Medicaid block grant proposal. Organizations interested in sponsoring the Twitter chat, please email Anna Walton at awalton@tnjustice.org. If you would like to become part of our social media megaphone group and receive the questions ahead of time, please email Charlotte Pate at cpate@tnjustice.org.

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
Tennessee Justice Center

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Stay connected:



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