Children's Champion

• March 17, 2021 •
Tennessee Justice Center

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MORE YOU KNOW

The American Rescue Plan and What's in it for Children
Last week, President Biden signed into law the American Rescue Plan Act. It includes several provisions to improve the overall well-being of Americans. The Prenatal-to-3 Policy Impact Center has outlined and summarized all the policies related to children and families. Some of the key provisions for families are:

- $1400 Direct payments for each child dependent including 17-23 years olds
- Extension of 15% increase in SNAP benefits thru September 2021
- Child Tax Credit Expansion benefiting 93% of Tennessee’s Children
- $900 million to Tennessee to stabilize and expand Child Care Assistance
- Enhanced and expanded premium tax credits to make ACA health plans more affordable or free for some people

Other provisions for child caregivers include extensions on unemployment benefits and a new option for states to expand postpartum Medicaid coverage from 60 days to 12 months.

The plan also gives states a new incentive to expand Medicaid and extend coverage to the hundreds of thousands of uninsured people who remain in the coverage gap across the state, including many parents. If Tennessee expands Medicaid, the law provides a 5-percentage point increase in our base federal medical assistance percentage (or FMAP) for two years, which would help bring more money into the state. Even after paying its share of the expansion costs, Tennessee would get $900 million on top of the $1.4 billion federal dollars that expansion would bring into the state.

Medicaid expansion would not only save Tennessee money, it would provide much needed health coverage to families across Tennessee. Children in non-expansion states are more likely to be uninsured than children in expansion states. Parents are
more likely to enroll their children in coverage if they also can enroll. Therefore, Medicaid expansion would increase both adult and child insurance rates. The American Rescue Plan provides the resources states need to start recovering from the pandemic. Now it is up to our leaders to accept the tremendous resources that are available to help Tennessee families.

Email your legislators and urge them to take advantage of these opportunities that will bring much needed relief to Tennesseans

ICYMI

- **25th Anniversary of TJC** – This year TJC celebrates 25 years of fighting for healthcare and nutrition equity for all Tennesseans. Check out this clip about the history of TJC here.

- **Covid-19 Vaccine** - Currently, all Tennessee counties are in Phase 1c for vaccine distribution. This phase expands vaccine eligibility to those who are 16+ with high-risk health conditions and their caregivers. Learn more on our COVID-19 page.

- **Recent Studies**
  - Medicaid and CHIP Eligibility, Enrollment, and Cost Sharing Policies as of January 2021: Findings from a 50-State Survey
  - Bolstering Family Income Essential to Help Children Emerge From Current Crisis
  - The Catastrophic Cost of Uninsurance: COVID-19 Cases and Deaths Closely Tied to America’s Health Coverage Gaps

- **New National Report**- A report from Georgetown’s Center on Children and Families found more than half of the infants born each year between 2010-2018 were enrolled in Medicaid. About 500,000 babies each year eligible for Medicaid were not enrolled for at least 90 days continuously which means they missed out on critical EPSDT well-child doctor visits. This includes more than 27% of infants in Tennessee. The discrepancies in continuous enrollment for infants is attributed to state administrative barriers. Read the report.
TCCY’s Children’s Advocacy Days 2021 - Last week, Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth held their annual Children’s Advocacy Days where state agencies and nonprofit organizations present on the work they are doing to improve the health and well-being of Tennessee’s children. [View the recordings.](#)

Federal Marketplace Special Enrollment - President Biden issued an [executive order](#) on January 28, 2021 calling for the Federal Marketplace to reopen for a special enrollment period from February 15 to May 15. This gives people another chance to sign up for Affordable Care Act (ACA) plans or change their current coverage. Apply now on [healthcare.gov](#).

LOOKING FORWARD

Federal updates

Public Charge Update

President Biden issued an [Executive Order](#) on February 2, 2021 which called for the review of the United States immigration system. He called for a full review of the current public charge policies and recommended state agencies outline steps to reduce fear and confusion among immigrant families. The Trump administration’s 2019 public charge rule deemed usage of federal benefits such as Medicaid and SNAP to be considered as a factor to deny some a visa, green card or entrance into the United States. **On March 9th, the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Justice released a statement saying they would no longer pursue litigation on the 2019 Public Charge policy and the 1999 Public Charge policies will be reinstated.** This means a person’s usage of SNAP, Medicaid, or medical services related to COVID-19 will not be relevant to immigration decisions.
The next step is for state agencies and advocates to spread awareness of this update and encourage immigrant families to access benefits.

State updates

**TennCare and DIDD Integration**

The state has proposed to move services that are managed by the Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (DIDD) to instead be managed by managed care organizations (MCOs). This will mean changes to the kinds and amount of supports and services provided to DIDD waiver participants. This could pose real problems for individuals with the most significant needs, challenges, and disabilities.

TennCare announced that they are seeking public comment on these changes. The public comment period began on February 19, 2021 and ends on Monday, March 22, 2021. The State's online comment portal can be found HERE. In the section that says, "I am addressing information on page...," you may write, "All Pages." Let the State know they need to maintain at least the current level of services indefinitely without reduction and that these programs need to be funded at a level that ensures providers are equitably compensated so that they are able to deliver quality and consistent care. The requested effective date of these changes is July 1, 2021. The state is moving forward with this plan without adequately responding to the concerns of DIDD waiver recipients, advocates, organizations, and other stakeholders.

Tell your legislators we need a fair and transparent integration plan that truly prioritizes the needs of individuals enrolled in the impacted programs

**P-EBT**

P-EBT is a lifeline for parents and students who have lost access to free/reduced price school meals due to the pandemic. Families, many who have lost jobs or seen their work hours cut, have waited since October 2020 to receive P-EBT money to help buy groceries for their children. We are disappointed to report that Round 3 P-EBT cards have not yet been issued as indicated in the original plan and timeline from DHS. The state cannot confirm when P-EBT benefits will get to families.

P-EBT cards should already be in the hands of hungry families across the state. Act now and tell elected officials and decision makers that parents cannot wait any longer. If you have been waiting for P-EBT and are willing to share your story to urge the state to move faster, please fill out this form.

TJC will send updates on any breaking news regarding P-EBT as we learn about them. Sign-up for our P-EBT Alerts.
How to Get Immigrants Covered

A Medicaid Master Class

Thursday, March 25, 2021

11:00 am CT / 12:00 pm ET

REGISTER NOW

With a growing immigrant population in Tennessee, chances are you have encountered a non-US citizen in need of health insurance coverage. The complex rules governing eligibility for immigrants can be daunting – especially during a global pandemic. During this 1-hour webinar, TJC’s knowledgeable team will discuss the Medicaid programs designed to provide coverage to immigrants including those who are undocumented.

Addressing College Hunger with SNAP

April 1 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm | Free

Addressing College Hunger with SNAP

Thursday, April 1, 2021

11:00 am CT / 12:00 pm ET
Join the College Hunger group for the second convening in our quarterly series to discuss how hunger impacts Tennessee students and what actions we can take together to improve access to SNAP and other nutrition safety net programs. We will share a quick overview of hunger on college campuses, discuss the latest changes to the nutrition programs in response to COVID-19 and learn from college hunger partners on how they are responding to food insecurity among students. Integrating nutrition programs like SNAP and WIC is an important step that all schools must take to support their students’ academic and future success.

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
Senior Director of Health Policy and Advocacy
Tennessee Justice Center

Stay connected:

Tennessee Justice Center
211 7th Ave N
Suite 100
Nashville, TN 37219
United States

outreach@tnjustice.org | 615-255-0331 | https://www.tnjustice.org

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