Another comment period for the Medicaid block grant has opened, and we are collecting comments through the end of the comment period on Sept. 9.

Back in 2019, Tennessee's legislature began pursuing a proposal that would radically alter the way our state's Medicaid program is funded. The proposal went through two comment periods (a state and a federal comment period), which they are required to do by law. After the Trump administration approved the TennCare waiver, the Tennessee state legislature voted to certify it. The proposal the Trump administration approved was NOT the same proposal that we all commented on during the comment periods in 2019. Because this revised Medicaid waiver did not go through the proper public comment period, it cannot legally go into effect.

The revised waiver still includes a cap on federal funds, allowing TennCare to cut Medicaid costs and divert savings to non-Medicaid uses. The revised waiver also includes some new provisions, such as extending the waiver for ten years, allowing TennCare to continue waiving retroactive coverage to most enrollees, and forcing children with special healthcare needs to go through Managed Care Organizations rather than getting care directly from their preferred providers.
When President Biden came into office, his administration inherited the responsibility to implement this revised TennCare waiver. In April of 2021, we sued to halt that process. In response, the Biden administration has agreed to re-open the comment period so that the public has a chance to comment on the last-minute changes to the TennCare waiver. The Biden administration must consider the comments before moving forward with the current waiver, so it’s more important than ever to raise our voices in opposition.

We are collecting comments to submit to the Biden administration through the survey below. Please take a few minutes to answer all the questions in this survey, and feel free to share your personal experiences in the open boxes, too!

Learn more about the Medicaid block grant and what it means for Tennesseans here and sign up to attend an informational webinar on Monday at 1 PM CT here.

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**IN CASE YOU MISSED IT**

**Child Tax Credit Payments**

As of July 15th, families have started receiving the expanded child tax credit payments. Payments will be sent on the 15th of every month until December. Families can receive up to $250 per child between ages 6-17 and up to $300 per child under 6 years old each month. Learn more and see if your child is eligible.

**Urgent Action Needed to Catch Up on Routine Childhood Vaccinations**

A recent report by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Georgetown University Center for Children and Families explores the decline in well-child visits and routine childhood immunizations and notes some potential solutions to reverse the decline. This is particularly important for Tennessee children after vaccine outreach programs for children were temporarily halted last month. Check out the full report to learn how to get children back on track.
TJC in the News

- Struggling Tennessee families now getting more TANF assistance, but hurdles remain
- Tennessee families struggle with state agencies to get home-based care for those with disabilities
- As deadline for summer P-EBT eligibility looms, Tennessee addresses delays
- Tennessee Justice Center finds permanent home in Cameron-Trimble neighborhood
- Routine Checkups Urged for TN Kids Before School Starts

Back to School Vaccine Info Session

On August 4th, we hosted a webinar with Dr. Barbara Dentz and Dr. Dorothy Sinard to discuss the importance of vaccination, how to discern facts from fiction, and how to join the battle to protect our public health. Check it out: Back to School Vaccine Info Session

Black Health Matters

Black babies in Tennessee are twice as likely to die than white babies. As part of our effort to get the state to center healthcare as a racial justice issue, we are committing to the #BlackHealthMatters pledge. Sign your name.
Make CHIP Permanent!

The Children’s Health Insurance Program has been around for 24 years. It covers 10 million children and pregnant women nationwide and about 45,000 in Tennessee. Despite its history of success, its funding still has to be reauthorized every few years unlike Medicare and Medicaid. 500 organizations including the Tennessee Justice Center recently sent a letter to the leaders of Congress asking them to make CHIP funding permanent. It emphasizes how CHIP is a critical support for families and needs to be made permanent. This would give lawmakers more time to focus on addressing other health issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic and health disparities.

Email Marsha Blackburn and other senators and representatives and tell them to support families by making CHIP, Medicaid postpartum coverage extension, and the increased child tax credit permanent.

$3.5 Trillion Senate “Build Back Better” Budget Resolution

On August 9th, the Senate previewed its $3.5 trillion budget resolution for the 2022 budget reconciliation process. It features many family-centered policies and follows on the tails of the $1.1 trillion infrastructure bill. Together, they comprise Biden’s American Families Plan goals. The $3.5 trillion resolution allocates $726 billion to the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee to implement policies such as:

- Universal Pre-K for 3- and 4-year-olds
- Improved child care benefit for working families
- Federal Paid Family and Medical Leave benefit program
- Extensions of the Child Tax Credit, Earned Income Tax Credit, and Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit expansions in the American Rescue Plan Act
- Investments in home and community-based services to help people with disabilities and home care workers

It also includes funding to create a new federal health program to provide coverage to the 2 million Americans in the Medicaid coverage gap. Let state and federal leaders know all Tennesseans need comprehensive health coverage and tell them to close the coverage gap.

SNAP Benefits

For the first time in 45 years, the USDA has increased the SNAP benefit by 21% to reflect the current cost realities of purchasing healthy food. The 42 million beneficiaries of SNAP can expect to see a
permanent benefit increase of $36.24/month per person starting on October 1, 2021. This will raise the benefit from about $4.25 to $5.45 per person per day.

TN UPDATES

HCBS Funding: TennCare’s ARPA Proposal

The American Rescue Plan Act increased the federal matching rate for Home and Community Based Services (HCBS). Therefore, Tennessee will get an additional $157 million to help expand and improve HCBS for TennCare enrollees. It is to be used by March 31, 2022, and the services must be delivered by March 31, 2024. Tennessee submitted its proposal in July and is awaiting a decision from CMS before it can be implemented. The proposal consists of wage increases for front-line HCBS workers and monetary support for family caregivers in ECF CHOICES, CHOICES, and the 1915(c) waiver. It also includes a plan to open up 2,000 spots in ECF CHOICES for individuals currently on waiting lists.

Child Care P-EBT is Here!
Earlier this month, $80 million in P-EBT benefits began loading onto SNAP EBT cards for 138,000 eligible Tennessee children for the months of October 2020 - May 2021! This money will help eligible families who participate in SNAP purchase healthy food for their children ages 5 and under. If you work with eligible families who have not received benefits, tell them to keep checking their SNAP EBT card balance. Benefits will come out in waves. October and November 2020 benefits are being added in August. More P-EBT benefits will be added in September and November to eligible families' SNAP EBT cards.

Children 5 and under are also eligible for Summer P-EBT ($375). However, it remains on hold. Stay tuned for more updates on when to expect summer P-EBT for children ages 5 and under.

For more information, click here for our Child Care P-EBT flyer!

JOIN US

Help shape the future of TennCare: What You Need to Know about the Block Grant Comment Period

Monday, August 23
1:00pm - 2:00pm
Free Webinar

REGISTER

Food Assistance for Formerly Incarcerated Individuals
Over 600,000 people are released from state and federal prisons every year in the United States. In Tennessee, about 47% of people who are released from prison are convicted again within 3 years. Programs like SNAP (Food Stamps) are available to help some formerly incarcerated individuals purchase groceries during their reentry period and beyond.

25th Anniversary Gala

Saturday, October 23
6:00pm - 9:00pm

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).