



MHAction is deeply concerned by the recent decision from the Department of Health and Human Services and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid to allow states to implement work requirements for Medicaid.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, this change would increase the number of families that fall in the gap between eligibility for Medicaid coverage and private insurance. Many are already stuck in this gap, earning too much to qualify for Medicaid, and too little to purchase their own health insurance.<sup>2</sup> Our government should be working to eliminate this coverage gap, not pushing more families into it.

We are concerned for the many families that are predicted to lose healthcare coverage because of these changes, and are also troubled by the reasoning behind the policy change. The false story that Medicaid recipients choose to rely on the program instead of working places the blame on low-income people with no other healthcare coverage options, and assumes that the cause of poverty is a lack of individual motivation to find a job. This offensive narrative ignores the reality of our modern economy, many jobs no longer come with the pay and benefits necessary to support a family, or even an individual.

Of the 25 million non-disabled adult Medicaid recipients who could be impacted by these new requirements, nearly 8 in 10 live in working families in which one or more adult is employed, and over 60% are themselves already working.<sup>3</sup> For these individuals this new requirement will only create bureaucratic hassle as they are forced to document and report employment. When similar work requirements were instituted for the SNAP program many individuals who met the work requirements ended up losing their benefits because of problems with paperwork and lack of adequate documentation.

Of adult Medicaid recipients not already working who would be impacted by work requirements, 36% are ill, 30% are taking care of family members, 15% are in school, and 9% are retired.<sup>4</sup> Forcing those who are sick, caring for family, or in school to meet work or volunteer requirements or to take on the bureaucratic hassle of proving why they are unable to work in order to access needed healthcare coverage defeats the purpose of Medicaid and will do nothing to lift these families out of poverty.

We see through this ploy for what it really is. Medicaid work requirements are not about reducing poverty or improving health outcomes, they are part of an effort to drive down costs

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.medicaid.gov/federal-policy-guidance/downloads/smd18002.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.communitycatalyst.org/resources/publications/document/2018/Community-Catalyst\\_Work-Requirements-and-Medicaid-Eligibility-in-Non-Expansion-States-Analysis.pdf](https://www.communitycatalyst.org/resources/publications/document/2018/Community-Catalyst_Work-Requirements-and-Medicaid-Eligibility-in-Non-Expansion-States-Analysis.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/understanding-the-intersection-of-medicaid-and-work/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cbpp.org/blog/medicaid-work-requirement-would-harm-unemployed-not-promote-work>



by kicking people out of the program. Coming on the heel of a massive tax cut for the wealthiest Americans and corporations, this is a particularly cruel effort to balance the budget on the backs of low-income people, justified by the lie that this will benefit them by “encouraging” them to work harder. Our friends, family and neighbors who use Medicaid are already working very hard, at jobs, at school, and at home caring for their families. It’s insulting to suggest that the government threatening their access to health care is necessary to motivate them to work.

MHAction firmly believes that Medicaid and other safety net programs serve a basic vital function of our government, to ensure that no one in this country dies for the crime of being low-income. Our government should be doing more to expand healthcare access instead of wasting time with petty attacks on the most vulnerable.