

Medicaid Health Coverage

Trust
Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority



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Medicaid health coverage, including prevention, telehealth and Medicaid Waiver services, should be available for vulnerable, eligible Alaskans across the lifespan.

Early, preventative support for vulnerable Alaskans is the responsible approach.

- State and local governments pay for their most vulnerable citizens either on the back end with expensive emergency and institutional care, or on the front end with less expensive and more effective community support services.
- Receiving services in the least restrictive environment ultimately leads to healthier and more meaningful lives for all Alaskans, as well as cost efficiencies for state government.

Medicaid offers health coverage for eligible Alaskans unable to afford healthcare, or who are at risk of institutionalization. Medicaid covers eligible low-income families, children, pregnant women, people with disabilities, elderly, blind, and certain adults between the ages of 19 and 64 years.

Medicaid Waiver services provide access to home and community-based support services which reduce the likelihood that vulnerable Alaskans will end up homeless, in crisis, admitted to inpatient care, or in the criminal justice system.

- For example, Alaskans with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (I/DD) utilize Medicaid for Home and Community-Based Waiver Services (HCBS) for daily and long-term supports that help people with daily living activities and employment.

- Without HCBS, many, if not most, Alaskans with significant I/DDs and seniors with Alzheimer's disease and related dementia (ADRD) and co-occurring physical disabilities would have to leave their homes or communities for institutionalized care, at a much greater expense.

Medicaid plays a critical role in the state's ability to address its opioid epidemic. Medicaid reimbursement to behavioral health treatment providers ensures they can serve low- or no-income Alaskans, thus increasing opportunities for treatment, recovery, and positive health outcomes.

Alaska's 1115 Behavioral Health Medicaid Waiver provides an integrated behavioral health system of care for all eligible Alaskans. This includes Alaskans experiencing:

- Serious mental illness (SMI)
- Severe emotional disturbance (SED)
- Substance use disorder (SUD)
- Co-occurring substance use with mental illness or other disabilities
- Families and children at risk for involvement with Office of Children's Services (OCS) or Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ).

Key Points

- Medicaid coverage for behavioral health services is likely to result in long-term and life-changing positive health outcomes for vulnerable Alaskans.
- Medicaid healthcare coverage promotes access to home and community-based services and supports to reduce the need for expensive institutional care.
- Medicaid-covered services cost significantly less than institutional care for all payers.



Telehealth

Recent telehealth flexibilities allowed by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services have been critical for access to services and need to remain in place.