

# Medicaid Health Coverage

Trust  
Alaska Mental Health  
Trust Authority

Alaskan Seniors  
**Living Longer Growing Stronger**  
from the Alaska Commission on Aging

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*Medicaid health coverage, including prevention, telehealth, substance misuse and mental health services, is essential for Alaskans who meet the federal income requirements.*

**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.

**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 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-to-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 waiver allowed for more behavioral health and substance misuse services to be reimbursable by Medicaid, which has increased access to care. Eligible Alaskans include youth and adults 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.



### Medicaid Rates

Providers are reimbursed for Medicaid-eligible services through rates set by the State and paid for by a combination of federal and state funds.

It is essential that reimbursement rates are not only adequate to cover the cost of providing care, but keep pace with inflation and staffing needs. This ensures that current providers who are reimbursed through Medicaid and Medicaid waivers maintain the provision of services and encourages new providers to offer services to Medicaid patients, increasing system capacity.