Five Key Facts: Veterans and Medicaid Expansion  

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The Medicaid Expansion is critical to veterans. By accepting federal funding to expand Medicaid, states can improve veterans’ access to health care. Here are some key facts:

1. **Not all veterans are eligible for health care services through the Department of Veterans Affairs**

   The Department of Veterans Affairs (“VA”) considers a veteran’s active duty status, condition of discharge, and length of service in determining eligibility for health care services. In addition, the VA uses a priority enrollment system to facilitate the management and delivery of health care services.¹ There are eight priority groups that determine a veteran’s eligibility and priority for using health care services.² Priority status is based on several factors, such as service-related disabilities and income-level. Depending on the VA’s medical care budget, veterans in lower priority groups may face restrictions on new enrollment or lose their eligibility.³

2. **Uninsured veterans have substantial medical needs**

   Uninsured veterans have a disproportionate amount and complexity of health issues. Over 40 percent of uninsured veterans report having unmet medical needs.⁴ About one-third of uninsured veterans have at least one chronic health condition, while over 15 percent have physical, mental, or emotional health problems.⁵

3. **Nearly half of today’s uninsured veterans would get the coverage they need with Medicaid Expansion**

   There are approximately 1.3 million uninsured veterans nationwide.⁶ Nearly half of the uninsured veteran population reports family income below 138% of the federal poverty level, and would get coverage if states accept federal funding to expand Medicaid.⁷ Only 10% of these veterans appear eligible for Medicaid under current law.⁸

4. **Rural veterans often have no VA facilities near them**

   Veterans eligible for VA health care services usually receive those services at facilities operated and staffed by the Veterans Health Administration.⁹ Proximity to VA facilities may impact the likelihood of veterans seeking health care services.¹⁰ This is particularly true for those in rural communities located far from VA facilities.¹¹ If these veterans had additional coverage through Medicaid, they could access local providers and get regular care.
5. For some veterans expanding Medicaid *automatically* improves their standing in the VA's priority system

Veterans eligible for Medicaid benefits may be placed in a higher priority group in the VA’s priority enrollment system.\(^2\) Therefore, if a state expands Medicaid, in addition to receiving Medicaid coverage, many veterans will also automatically have improved access to health care through the national VA system.

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2. *Id.* at 2.
3. *Id.* at 4.
5. *Id.*
6. *Id.* at 1.
7. *Id.* at 3.
8. *Id.*