



## Medicaid Expansion Would Help Tennessee's Veterans

The new health reform law includes an expansion of the Medicaid program to provide health care for millions of uninsured individuals, mainly low-income adults. The Supreme Court ruled in June that states can choose whether to expand their Medicaid programs. If Tennessee chooses to expand its Medicaid program, the federal government will pay *all* of the cost for the first three years, with the federal payments reducing to 90 percent by 2020. This is a great deal for Tennessee. The expansion would bring billions of federal dollars into Tennessee's economy. It would also provide essential health coverage for tens of thousands of uninsured veterans and their families in Tennessee who struggle to get the health care they need.

- 35,000 veterans in Tennessee do not have health insurance. In addition, 20,000 family members of veterans do not have health insurance.<sup>1</sup>
- Uninsured veterans suffer from significant health problems. One-third of uninsured veterans have at least one chronic health condition, 15.3 percent are in fair or poor health, and 15.9 percent are limited because of physical, mental, or emotions problems.<sup>2</sup>
- Uninsured veterans and their families struggle to get the health care they need. Over 40 percent of uninsured veterans have unmet medical needs, and 33.7 percent have delayed care due to cost.<sup>3</sup> More than half of veterans' family members also have unmet medical needs, and 44.1 percent have delayed care due to cost.<sup>4</sup>
- Nationally, nearly half of uninsured veterans and over 35 percent of their family members have incomes below 133 percent of the federal poverty level<sup>5</sup> (around \$15,400 per year for an individual) and would be eligible for Medicaid under the new law. If Tennessee reflects national averages, **as many as 17,000 Tennessee veterans and 7,000 of their family members would qualify for Medicaid if the state chooses to expand the program.**
- Many veterans of the National Guard and reserves are not eligible for health benefits through the Veteran's Administration, but would be eligible for Medicaid if Tennessee chooses to expand the program. Even Veterans who are eligible for VA health services would benefit from the Medicaid expansion. More than half of veterans eligible for VA services also have incomes below 133 percent FPL and would likely qualify for Medicaid. Medicaid could be used to supplement their VA coverage.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jennifer Haley & Genevieve M. Kenney, *Uninsured Veterans and Family Members: Who Are They and Where Do They Live?*, URBAN INSTITUTE, May 2012, at Table 4, available at <http://www.rwjf.org/files/research/74428.quickstrike.veterans.052412.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* at 6.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> The expanded Medicaid provision of the ACA ensures eligibility for those below 133% FPL. However, there is a 5% disregard of income, increasing the eligibility level to 138% FPL.

<sup>6</sup> Haley & Kenney, *supra*, at 3.

