



Medicaid Expansion is Good for Children

The new health care law expands the Medicaid program to provide healthcare for millions of uninsured individuals, primarily parents and low-income adults. The Supreme Court ruled in June that states can choose whether or not to accept the Medicaid expansion. Low-income children, even if they are already eligible for Medicaid, have much to gain if Tennessee expands its Medicaid program to cover their parents. Over 80,000 Tennessee children are eligible for Medicaid but not enrolled.¹ Many of these children will enroll in Medicaid and stay enrolled if their parents are covered. Getting kids insured makes them healthier. For some, it can change their lives.

Here's what the research shows about why expanding Medicaid to cover low-income parents is important for Tennessee's children:

- **Expanding Medicaid to cover parents means that more eligible children will enroll.** Children who are eligible for health insurance are *three times more likely* to enroll if their parents also have insurance. Previous expansions of Medicaid coverage for parents have led to a significant increase in enrollment of eligible children and a drop in the number of uninsured children.
- **Expanding Medicaid to cover parents means that children are more likely to *stay* enrolled.** Studies have found that covering parents makes it less likely that children have breaks in their own Medicaid coverage.
- **Expanding Medicaid to cover parents makes it more likely that children will receive needed preventive care and other health care services.** Studies have found that insured children whose parents are also insured are more likely to receive check-ups and other care, compared to insured children whose parents are uninsured.
- **Parents' health can affect children's health and well-being.** The Institute of Medicine has reported that a parents' poor physical or mental health can contribute to a stressful family environment that may impair the health and well-being of a child. Moreover, uninsured parents who can't get care may be unable to work or may end up with big medical bills if they do get care. In either case, the financial consequences have a big impact on children even if the children have coverage.

Sources:

Martha Heberlein, *et al.*, "Medicaid Coverage for Parents Under the Affordable Care Act," Georgetown University Center for Families and Children, June 2012.

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Kathryn Schwartz, "Spotlight on uninsured Parents: How a Lack of Coverage Affects Parents and Their Families," Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured, June 2007.

Leighton Ku and Matthew Broaddus, "Coverage of Parents Helps Children, Too," Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, October 2006.

¹ State Health Facts: Tennessee, available at <http://www.statehealthfacts.org/profileind.jsp?ind=776&cat=3&rgn=44&cmprgn=1>. Another 40,000 children are eligible but not enrolled in the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).