



Who is impacted by this issue?

Wisconsin's Medicaid program provides critical health and long-term supports and services to more than 1 million Wisconsinites. Nearly two-thirds of Wisconsin Medicaid participants are older adults, people with disabilities or children, many of whom have disabilities.

In Wisconsin, adults and children with disabilities may access the Medicaid program in many different ways and through programs that have different names.

- ⇒ Medicaid including the BadgerCare program and Elderly, Blind Disabled (EBD) Medicaid provide access to acute and primary care and are vital to health care security.
- ⇒ Many Wisconsinites with disabilities and older adults use a specialized long-term care program such as Family Care or IRIS to provide the support they need to stay in their home and participate in their community.
- ⇒ Children with significant disabilities may access support through the Children's Long Term Support, Children's Community Options Program (CCOP), and mental health programs such as Comprehensive Community Services (CCS).
- ⇒ Medicaid card services fund essential services like personal care which is help with things like bathing, dressing and eating. More than 15,000 people in Wisconsin use personal care annually.

People with mental health needs and /or a substance use disorder may access services through Medicaid programs such as Comprehensive Community Services (CCS), Community Support Program (CSP) or Community Recovery Services (CRS). Mental health crisis services are also a Medicaid funded services. These programs are administered by counties and tribes.

Why is this issue important?

Medicaid is much more than basic health care for people with disabilities. It provides funding for services that are not covered by other types of insurance and are vital to the independence and health of people with different types of disabilities.

Examples:

- ⇒ Long term supports such as personal care services that provide assistance with bathing, toileting, and other basic needs; supportive home care, employment supports, meaningful community-based day activities and more.
- ⇒ In home therapy, home modifications, respite and other critical supports for children with significant disabilities and their families.
- ⇒ Psycho social rehab services such as employment support, daily living skills, peer support.
- ⇒ Non Emergency Medical transportation (NEMT) to transport Medicaid members who need to get to and from medical services, but do not have transportation. Because so many Medicaid members are non-drivers, transportation to medical appointments is essential to ensure access to needed health care.



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How are supports for this issue funded?

Medicaid funding is a partnership of federal, state, and in some cases county government.

The federal medical assistance percentage (FMAP) is the portion of total Medicaid spending supported by federal matching funds. The federal match varies for different Medicaid programs from 60% to 100%. The state or in some cases Wisconsin counties, pay for the local match. Wisconsin has received increased COVID-19 federal matching for certain services.

Federal Medicaid matching funds are approximately \$5 billion annually and are the largest funding source for Wisconsin's Medicaid programs and help to ensure that state general purpose revenue tax dollars can be used for other essential purposes.

More than 2/3 of Medicaid spending in Wisconsin is on people with disabilities and older adults. Medicaid is a flexible program that allows states to design supports and services to meet emerging needs, underserved populations and respond to economic or other changes, including situations like the COVID-19 pandemic.

What are major concerns related to this issue?

There is a shortage of medical professionals who accept Medicaid in some key specialty areas including mental health and dental care. Medicaid reimbursement rates are lower than commercial insurance and targeted reimbursement rates can be important as part of a strategy to address access issues.

Wisconsin has the opportunity to increase access to health care for thousands of uninsured Wisconsinites by allowing BadgerCare eligibility to increase from 100% to 138% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). Increasing Medicaid eligibility will also allow workers who support people with disabilities to work more hours (currently many workers who need health care for themselves or their families are forced to reduce their work hours and earnings to maintain eligibility for BadgerCare.) The federal government is supporting states to make these eligibility changes by increasing the federal match – estimated to amount to a net savings of \$200 million for Wisconsin (according to a January 2018 LFB estimate). This change will result in a significant reduction in spending of state tax dollars.

How has this issue been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic?

Access to Medicaid has increased in importance due to COVID-19. With the rising rate of unemployment, many Wisconsinites have lost access to employer provided health care insurance and are enrolling in Medicaid. Access to health is especially important during a pandemic.

Many direct support professionals who care for people with disabilities do not have access to employer provided insurance and have struggled to access vital care during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has elevated the importance of providing these frontline workers with access to insurance and expanding Medicaid eligibility would be a significant and cost effective option for meeting this need.

