



Medicaid Work Requirements

M Myth: Medicaid work requirements take benefits from the vulnerable.

R Reality: Medicaid work requirements preserve resources for the truly needy.

Medicaid was intended to be a safety net for the truly needy. But over time, Medicaid has expanded to include more and more able-bodied adults. In fact, the number of able-bodied adults on the program has more than quadrupled in recent years, rising from seven million to more than 28 million enrollees.¹ This enrollment surge is siphoning away resources that could instead go to the truly vulnerable such as low-income kids, seniors, and individuals with disabilities. Work requirements for able-bodied adults help reverse this trend and free up limited dollars for those who need help.

M Myth: Work requirements are unnecessary because most adult Medicaid recipients already work.

R Reality: Most able-bodied adults on Medicaid do not work at all.

Very few able-bodied adults on Medicaid work full-time.² According to Census Bureau data, more than half of able-bodied adult Medicaid recipients do not work at all.³ Just 16 percent work full-time, year-round jobs.⁴ Able-bodied adults trapped on Medicaid need a path out of dependency and that is exactly what work requirements provide.

M Myth: Work requirements will increase administrative costs.

R Reality: After work requirements are implemented, administrative costs decrease.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, states with food stamp work requirements have administrative costs 30-50 percent lower than states without work requirements.⁵ Additionally, states with work requirements have been found to have lower payment error rates than states without the reform.⁶

M Myth: Work requirements will force low-income enrollees into low-wage jobs.

R Reality: Adults leaving welfare after work requirements find employment in hundreds of industries and their incomes more than double.

Individuals who leave welfare do not just go back to work in low-wage industries but in a variety of fields including health care, information technology, finance, public service, and more. When Kansas implemented food stamp work requirements, able-bodied adults leaving welfare found employment in over 600 industries.⁷ It is no wonder then that, after leaving welfare, former enrollees' incomes more than doubled on average.⁸

M Myth: Work requirements are cruel because there are no jobs available.

R Reality: The American economy is stronger than it has been in decades.

There are 7.1 million open jobs in America today, more than any in history.⁹ In fact, there are more available jobs than job seekers.¹⁰ With many employers giving cash bonuses and higher wages to attract employees, there has never been a better time to get a job.¹¹

M Myth: Work requirements will increase emergency room use.

R Reality: Medicaid enrollees are nearly twice as likely to use the ER multiple times per year.

Working-age Medicaid enrollees use the emergency room significantly more than individuals with private or no health insurance. In 2015, working-age adults on Medicaid were more than twice as likely to use the ER two to three times per year than the uninsured and more than four times as likely as individuals with private insurance.¹² Additional studies found a large spike in ER use amongst working-age adults from 2013-2015, the first two years of ObamaCare's Medicaid expansion to working-age, able-bodied adults.¹³

M Myth: Work requirements will increase the uninsured rate.

R Reality: Getting able-bodied adults back to work can help them get real, employer-sponsored insurance.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, nearly 70 percent of private-sector employers offer health insurance.¹⁴ When the Tennessee ended its Medicaid expansion, most able-bodied adults went back to work and 90 percent of them gained employer-sponsored insurance as a result.¹⁵ The best way to help able-bodied adults get insurance is to get them back to work.

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