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Medicaid enrollment steady with tech overhauls

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Half of states boasted easier enrollment into the Medicaid program last year by revamping decades-old systems and streamlining eligibility and enrollment systems, according a [report](#) [1] released yesterday by the Kaiser Family Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured, conducted with the Georgetown University Center for Children and Families.

The 50-state survey of the Medicaid program found that some states maintained enrollment for the low-income population to receive coverage, attributed to updated technology. Recent federal funding helped states to modernize eligibility and enrollment systems, *Government Health IT reported* [2].

"While strained state budgets have taken a toll on administrative resources, states have sharpened their use of technology and streamlined their procedures to create more efficient programs, while also simplifying the steps for families to enroll in and renew coverage," the report said.

For example, the report singled out Oklahoma--the only state that is fully automated--which uses a real-time eligibility determination system, available 24/7. The system allows individuals to apply online and receive a decision on their application immediately.

Thirteen states electronically verify the citizenship of Children Health Insurance Programs (CHIP) and Medicaid enrollees with the Social Security Administration, bringing the total number of states doing so to 44, [according to](#) [3] *Governing*. Five (Georgia, Iowa, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and South Carolina) streamlined digital information from other public agencies to determine eligibility for children, known as Express Lane Eligibility. And five (Colorado, Georgia, Maine, New Hampshire and West Virginia) enhanced their online application capabilities--some accepting electronically submitted applications or electronic signatures for the first time.

Despite the economic downturn and cuts to state budgets, nearly every state maintained the same level of coverage, [according to](#) [4] *MedPage Today*. Federal law under the Affordable Care Act mandates that states not make changes to Medicaid that would reduce coverage for low-income beneficiaries. However, 26 states are suing over what they say is unconstitutional requirements for states to expand Medicaid programs, a decision to be played out in the Supreme Court later this year.

The state health insurance program covers 60 million Americans. With foreseen expansion of the program in 2014, Medicaid will gain an additional 16 million Medicaid eligibles, *Kaiser Health News reported* [5].

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is encouraging upgraded or new eligibility and enrollment systems by matching 90 percent of funds through 2015. So far, 18 states have received approval for their system upgrades, when 11 others have sent their plans to CMS, according to *Government Health IT*.

For more information:

- check out the [report](#) [6]
- read the *Kaiser Health News article* [5]
- here's the *Government Health IT article* [2]
- read the *MedPage Today article* [4] (registration required)
- read the *Governing blog post* [3]
- here's the *Bloomberg article* [7]

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Links:

[1] <http://www.kff.org/medicaid/Briefing-2012-Data-50-State-Survey-Medicaid.cfm>

[2] <http://www.govhealthit.com/news/states-maintained-medicaid-coverage-online-tools-fewer-enrollment-steps>

[3] <http://www.governing.com/blogs/view/states-turn-to-technology-to-improve-medicaid-and-chip-programs.html>

[4] <http://www.medpagetoday.com/PublicHealthPolicy/Medicaid/30741>

[5] <http://capsules.kaiserhealthnews.org/index.php/2012/01/states-ease-barriers-to-medicaid-chip-enrollment-survey-says/>

[6] <http://www.kff.org/medicaid/8272.cfm>

[7] <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-01-18/states-streamline-medicaid-using-u-s-funds-to-cut-costs.html>

[8] <http://www.fiercehealthfinance.com/story/governors-contest-medicaid-cuts-floated-debt-ceiling-talks/2011-07-12>

[9] <http://www.fiercehealthfinance.com/story/children-medicaid-have-trouble-finding-specialists/2011-07-05>

[10] <http://www.fiercehealthfinance.com/story/providers-financial-burden-lessens-florida-covers-more-kids/2011-11-29>