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HEALTH CARE

Medicaid Enrollment Remained Stable in 2011

by Sophie Quinton

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The number of Americans getting their insurance from Medicaid or the Childrens Health Insurance Program remained stable in 2011, despite a recession that strained state budgets and pushed more people into poverty, according to data from [the Kaiser Family Foundation released on Wednesday](#).

New federal eligibility and enrollment requirements for the public insurance programs pressured states to keep enrollment steady, while tight budgets and increased federal funding for technological improvements helped states upgrade their administrative systems, according to a 50-state survey conducted by the Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured and the Georgetown University Center for Children and Families.

"The requirement in the [law] that states maintain their eligibility levels and enrollment and renewal procedures was central in preserving coverage during 2011," the survey said. Under the health reform law, states are required to maintain the eligibility, enrollment, and renewal policies they had in place in March 2010, until a planned expansion of Medicaid in 2014.

Eleven states moved to expand coverage, according to the survey, with eight of the 11 expansions targeting low-income, uninsured children. However, states are still taking action to reduce the cost of public insurance programs, primarily through cutting payments to doctors, the survey found. Some states are also cutting back on

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benefits, and 14 states plan to raise or impose co-pays in 2012.

Enrollment in Medicaid and CHIP has risen since 2008, as more Americans found themselves unemployed or facing lower incomes. The new data suggest those numbers are starting to level off. Medicaid and CHIP currently provide health insurance coverage to nearly 60 million Americans, according to the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

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