



Report Finds Medicaid Expansion Associated with Lower Child Uninsured Rate

While the Affordable Care Act's Medicaid expansion was designed to help the large number of uninsured adults who could not afford private insurance, the policy change has proven to be immensely helpful to children too, according to a new report by the Georgetown University Center for Children and Families.

Children in states that expanded Medicaid are almost twice as likely to have health coverage than those in states that have not. The report points to the strong link between child and parent health insurance status.

"When parents gain Medicaid coverage, they are more likely to enroll their children in whole family health coverage," said Adam Searing, research professor at Georgetown University and lead author of the report. "With many parents losing their jobs and their health insurance, those living in states that have not expanded Medicaid struggle to find affordable health coverage as the safety net is not there to catch them as it is in other states."

When parents gain Medicaid coverage, they are more likely to get the help they need to be healthy and effective parents and more likely to take their children to the doctor to get the care they need, according to research cited in the report.

Children in non-expansion states have been falling behind on health coverage compared to their peers; their uninsured rates grew at nearly three times the rate of children in Medicaid expansion states between 2016 and 2019. Two non-expansion states, Texas and Florida, were responsible for 41 percent of the coverage losses for children over the three-year period examined.

"Now is the time for states that have refused Medicaid expansion funding to reexamine that decision given the hardships children and families are facing due to the pandemic and related recession," said Joan Alker, executive director of the Georgetown University Center for Children and Families. "Medicaid expansion will help families get back on their feet and provide parents with help to support their children's health, financial security, and developmental needs."

The Georgetown University report also highlights how Medicaid expansion improves maternal and infant health by increasing access to preconception and prenatal care that helps babies get a healthier start in life.

The report is available at ccf.georgetown.edu

The Center for Children & Families (CCF), part of the Health Policy Institute at the McCourt School of Public Policy at Georgetown University, is an independent, nonpartisan policy and research center with a mission to expand and improve high-quality, affordable health coverage.