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**Press Webinar Today at 10 a.m. ET**

[Register Here for Link](#)

**As Congress Considers Major Cuts to Medicaid, New Georgetown University Report Sheds Light on Role Medicaid Fulfills for Small Towns and Rural Communities**

*Federal Medicaid cuts would have outsized impact on rural America*

Medicaid plays a larger role in providing health coverage to people living in small towns and rural communities than it does in metropolitan areas, a trend that is particularly striking among children, according to an extensive analysis by the Georgetown University Center for Children and Families (CCF).

The [report](#) found that non-elderly adults and children living in rural areas and small towns are more likely than those living in metro areas to rely on Medicaid for their health insurance. As a consequence, cuts to federal Medicaid funding and other changes to Medicaid being contemplated in Congress will cause harm everywhere, but are more likely to cause greater harm to rural communities and small towns than metro areas. Report findings included:

- Nearly 41 percent of children in small towns and rural areas rely on Medicaid for their coverage, compared to about 38 percent in metro areas. In six states, at least half of children living outside of metro areas are covered by Medicaid. These include New Mexico (59.9%), Louisiana (57.7%), Arizona (55.9%), Florida (51.9%), South Carolina (51.1%), and Arkansas (50.5%).

- Among adults younger than 65, about 18 percent of those in small towns and rural America get their coverage through Medicaid, compared to about 16 percent in metro areas.
- In fifteen states, at least one-fifth of non-elderly adults living in small towns and rural areas are covered by Medicaid. These include Arizona (35.9%), New York (33.9%), New Mexico (31.6%), Louisiana (30.2%), Kentucky (28.5%), West Virginia (25.5%), Oregon (24.9%), Washington (24.4%), Montana (22.2%), Arkansas (22.0%), Maine (21.9%), Vermont (21.7%), Massachusetts (21.5%), Michigan (21.2%), and Alaska (20.4%).
- In counties with a large share of American Indian or Alaska Native residents and tribal lands, residents across all age groups – especially those 65 and older – are more likely to rely on Medicaid for coverage.

“Medicaid is critically important to the families and healthcare systems in rural America,” said Joan Alker, CCF Executive Director and lead author of the report. “Across the country – but especially in rural areas – Medicaid protects families from excessive medical debt, pays for the majority of residents in nursing homes, and pays for a large share of births and maternal care. Large cuts to federal Medicaid funding would put the residents of small towns and rural communities and their health care systems at serious risk. These communities already face greater barriers to their health and challenges in maintaining an adequate health infrastructure, and draconian cuts to Medicaid will cause great harm.”

During a press call releasing the report on January 15, Alker was joined by Benjamin Anderson, President and Chief Executive Officer of Hutchinson Regional Healthcare System in Kansas, who explained the importance of Medicaid to rural residents and rural health systems.

"Medicaid represents a lifeline to millions of rural Americans and the health systems caring for them," said Anderson. "Many of the people who receive care at Hutchinson Regional Healthcare System are covered by Medicaid. This is especially evident with maternal-child care. Our community health and local economy are tied to the stability of the Medicaid program."

She was also joined by Dr. Katy Backes Kozhimannil, Co-Director of the Rural Health Research Center and a Professor in the Division of Health Policy and Management, University of Minnesota School of Public Health who pointed out the importance of Medicaid to maternal health and Native American communities.

“The footprint of Medicaid in Indian Country and across rural lands is substantial and important. Consideration of this importance is relevant for the nation’s maternal health crisis and for health care access and outcomes across the life course, said Dr. Kozhimannil.

This report builds on [previous research](#) by CCF showing a clear correlation between increases in Medicaid coverage and improvements in the uninsured rate for children in small towns and rural areas. The earlier study also found that the Affordable Care Act’s Medicaid expansion was

associated with improvements in the uninsured rate for non-elderly adults, especially in non-metro counties.

An report and interactive maps featuring a county-level breakdown of Medicaid coverage are available at [ccf.georgetown.edu](http://ccf.georgetown.edu).

This report primarily relies on data from the Census Bureau's 2023 American Community Survey (ACS).

*The Center for Children & Families (CCF), part of the McCourt School of Public Policy at Georgetown University, is an independent, nonpartisan policy and research center founded in 2005.*

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