

Medicaid **covers** US

Communications Toolkit 2021



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Public Opinion and Messaging

ACS CAN conducted public opinion research to learn what people think about the value of Medicaid, especially in the turbulent health and economic landscape created by COVID-19. The project also included a message study to learn what recent messages are most salient to illustrate the value of Medicaid. The following outlines a message frame and key points to use in activities promoting the importance of health insurance through Medicaid.

Key Messaging Tips

- ★ Describe the diverse populations who rely on Medicaid including seniors in nursing homes, people with disabilities, and low-income children and families.
- ★ Explain the role Medicaid plays in helping people with cancer get the care they need to help them fight and survive the disease.
- ★ Illustrate the importance of Medicaid to those who have lost jobs and need Medicaid to help them access health care and avoid catastrophic medical bills.
- ★ Humanize the impacts of the pandemic by focusing on those working on the front lines, which includes people in essential jobs such as in grocery stores and pharmacies, home health workers in nursing homes and front office staff at hospitals and health clinics, who are more likely to lack access to affordable health insurance and are at a greater risk for contracting COVID-19.

Core Message Frame

Medicaid provides health insurance to low-income children and adults, seniors and people with disabilities, so that they can get the care they need to get and stay healthy. It allows people to see a doctor when they are sick, get check-ups, buy medications and go to the hospital. In tough times like these, when people lose jobs and need help, Medicaid protects people's health and their finances — because no one should have to choose between paying for health care and paying for rent or groceries. When our families are protected, our communities and our economy are stronger. Medicaid keeps hospital doors open to provide lifesaving care for people with cancer and other diseases, secures more jobs in our communities and helps our state and nation become healthier and more prosperous.

Core Messages

- ★ Medicaid is a health insurance program for low-income children and adults, seniors and people with disabilities.
 - ★ Medicaid covers lifesaving treatment and care for some of our most vulnerable citizens like low-income seniors and individuals in nursing homes. It helps people with disabilities remain in their homes and communities and have more control over their lives. The program also provides children and pregnant women access to coverage that helps build healthier families.
- ★ Medicaid allows people to see a doctor when they are sick, get check-ups, buy medications and go to the hospital.
- ★ Children with health insurance through Medicaid can get services like early screening and detection that help them manage things like asthma or vision problems, allowing them to participate, thrive and succeed in school.
- ★ Medicaid can provide temporary health insurance to people who lose a job or become too sick to work.
- ★ Medicaid offers financial protection for working families so that they do not have to go bankrupt when they face an unexpected illness or need to go to the hospital.
- ★ Medicaid makes it possible for local hospitals, clinics, doctors and schools to provide health services in their community.

73% of voters have a positive impression of Medicaid. After learning more about Medicaid, 92% of voters say Medicaid is important.

Medicaid and Cancer

- ★ Millions of Americans have cancer. For many of them, Medicaid makes it possible to get the care they need to fight their disease. Medicaid covers cancer screenings, diagnostic tests, treatments, surgeries, prescription medications and follow-up care. Medicaid provides cancer patients the best chance to fight and survive the disease.
- ★ 2.3 million Americans with a history of cancer rely on Medicaid coverage for their care.

Medicaid and the COVID-19 Pandemic

- ★ Millions of Americans have lost jobs since COVID-19 hit. During these tough economic times, paying for health coverage and care can be out of reach. Health insurance through Medicaid is affordable and can help people get the care they need, while protecting their families from big medical bills.
- ★ The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are going to be felt in our communities for years to come. Many small businesses will remain closed, lay-offs will likely continue and millions of jobs will not come back. In this time of economic distress, it is important that millions of struggling Americans who have lost jobs through no fault of their own can get comprehensive, affordable health insurance through Medicaid.

84% of voters feel having health insurance is important during the pandemic, but a similar proportion (80%) say that private insurance is not affordable if you don't get it through a job.

72% of voters think the government has a responsibility to help people get affordable health coverage if they lose a job or become uninsured.

Medicaid's Role in Addressing Health Disparities

- ★ There is strong evidence that discrimination due to a person's race and color of their skin can limit their ability to be healthy and get care when they are sick. Discrimination and systemic racism are part of the reason that Black Americans are still 1.5 times more likely to be uninsured than white Americans. Medicaid helps address these disparities by leveling the playing field - helping people of color and individuals/families in under resourced communities get health insurance coverage to access the care they need to get and stay healthy.

Nearly two-thirds of voters say racism and discrimination affect a person's ability to get a job that includes health insurance and other benefits.

Nearly two-thirds of voters say systemic racism and discrimination make it harder for people of color to access health care, see doctors regularly, receive preventive services and treat serious health conditions.

70% of voters say living in a rural community affects the likelihood that a person is able to get a job that includes health insurance and other benefits.

Medicaid Expansion

- ★ Expanding Medicaid is a good deal for states. The federal government will pay 90% of the costs of expanding Medicaid to cover low-income parents and adults. At a time when so many of our friends and neighbors are losing jobs as well as their health insurance, expanding Medicaid is a win-win for individuals and families as well as our state budget.

76% of voters support raising the income limits for Medicaid so that more low-income people can qualify.

When asked about the 12 states that have not yet expanded Medicaid, 63% support raising those income limits and only 17% want to keep the current lower limits.

- ★ One way to protect individuals and families affected by COVID-19 is to [keep the Medicaid program strong / strengthen and expand Medicaid] so that it is available to all who need it. With so many people losing their jobs and their health insurance, Medicaid can help ensure that they have access to affordable coverage and can get the care they need.
- ★ Medicaid expansion is helping states respond to insurance coverage losses due to the pandemic and economic downturn. In states that expanded Medicaid, the number of uninsured individuals is lower compared to non-expansion states, providing important protections to individuals and families.

Messages to Defend Medicaid

- ★ Cuts to Medicaid have real consequences for our state, health care providers and system.

- ★ When people lose health insurance, they still need health care. Without

Medicaid coverage, hospitals must provide even more uncompensated care.

- ★ Taxpayers are left to foot the bill when people do not have access to health coverage.
- ★ If hospitals are not reimbursed for the care they provide, they are forced to make tough decisions like laying off staff or closing their doors.
- ★ Every dollar cut from [STATE'S] Medicaid program means less federal money coming into the state and, instead, going to other states.

71% of voters say they would oppose their state cutting the number of people who are enrolled in the Medicaid in order to balance state budgets.

- ★ Policymakers are considering a number of new requirements that will layer on even more red tape and government bureaucracy to Medicaid—costing millions in taxpayer dollars.
- ★ Low-income children, working parents and people with disabilities could lose their health coverage as a result of these new requirements.
- ★ Taking away people’s health insurance does nothing to help them find work, lift themselves up, or help them take care of their families.
 - ★ In the midst of the devastating impacts of COVID-19, insurance through Medicaid helps individuals and families have access to the care they need. Cutting Medicaid now would only worsen this health and economic crisis.
- ★ Instead of helping working families, many of these proposals will just make life harder.
 - ★ Losing access to Medicaid can have serious consequences for people’s health and health care costs. Research shows that living without health coverage means that you are more likely than those with health insurance to be diagnosed with cancer at a later stage, when it is more costly to treat, and patients are less likely to survive.
- ★ Stop the rush to make cuts to Medicaid.

Telling Your Story

Many of us have experience with and have benefitted from Medicaid – as a patient, a provider, or a member of the community. Medicaid may provide health insurance to you, your family members, friends or neighbors. Maybe you know people who cannot afford health care coverage because the cost of private insurance is out of reach and their state didn't expand Medicaid. Or, you may have a sustainable rural hospital and healthy work force in your community because Medicaid is there to support the health care system. Whatever the connection, Medicaid plays an important role in the health of our families, communities, and economy.

Telling stories about the impact Medicaid is a critical part of helping decisionmakers understand the importance of Medicaid. There are many ways that you can share your story and perspective:

- ★ A letter to the editor or opinion piece in your local paper
- ★ A letter, email, or call to your state legislators
- ★ Sharing your story at key legislative hearings
- ★ A conversation with a family member or colleague who might not see the importance of Medicaid
- ★ A social media post, inviting others to share their own connection to Medicaid as well

Here are some tips to support sharing your story:

- ★ **Use strong messages:** Review the messages in this toolkit and incorporate some of them in your story to ensure you are elevating effective points about the value of Medicaid.
- ★ **Keep it brief:** Consider your word count—for a letter to the editor, newspapers typically hold them to a 150-250 word maximum, so be sure to check with the paper ahead of time to make sure you're within the allowable word count. And in general, a shorter story is more likely to gain traction on social media or stick with your legislator.
- ★ **Be you:** What you bring to the discussion that no one else can is your personal perspective about how Medicaid impacts real people in your community. Be sure to explain why Medicaid matters in the context of your personal story.
- ★ **Get local:** Remember to localize your stories. Editors, friends, and legislators are looking to understand or show how bigger issues impact your local area. And, smaller papers and blogs are often easier to place content in than major publications.

- ★ **Keep it simple:** The person reading your story may have never heard of this issue before, so write your story as if you're explaining it to your neighbor for the first time. Avoid acronyms or "inside ballgame" language.
- ★ **Pick one fact:** Try to stick to one key fact. Because we're so passionate about this issue, you may have a lot of information you want to share. But if you give too many stats and facts, or facets of your story, they won't stick with your reader. Pick the one or two you think are the most powerful and make your case with those.
- ★ **Submit once:** For a letter to the editor, don't submit the same letter to multiple newspapers in the same market – editors don't like to see something from their paper printed in a competing paper and it may hurt your chances of getting published now and in the future.
- ★ **Get creative:** Are you posting something on your social media page? Try taking a video of yourself or sharing photos that connect with your story.

Social Graphics

Download these social graphics and more at www.medicaidcoversus.org/resources

Thanks to Medicaid, I can get the care I need to fix my glaucoma and restore my vision.



 Medicaid covers US

I got the care I needed to fight my cancer because of Medicaid.



 Medicaid covers US

My patients deserve to get the care they need. Thanks to Medicaid, they can.



 Medicaid covers US

Thanks to Medicaid, he can see the doctors he needs to grow and thrive.



 Medicaid covers US

Medicaid makes it possible for local hospitals, clinics, doctors, and schools to provide health services in our community.




 Medicaid covers US

In tough times like these, Medicaid is there to make sure families can protect their health and their finances.




 Medicaid covers US

More than 7 in 10 voters think the government has a responsibility to help people get affordable health coverage if they lose a job or become uninsured.




(2020 Survey conducted by ACS CAN)




Medicaid covers US

More than 7 in 10 voters support raising the income limits for Medicaid so that more low-income people can qualify.




(2020 Survey conducted by ACS CAN)



Medicaid covers US

92% of voters say that Medicaid is an important program.


(2020 Survey conducted by ACS CAN)



Medicaid covers US

Nearly 2 in 3 voters say systemic racism and discrimination make it harder for people of color to access care, see doctors, receive preventive services, and treat serious health conditions.

(2020 Survey conducted by ACS CAN)



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