



Expanding Medicaid in South Dakota Communications Toolkit 2022

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Key Messaging

ACS CAN and our coalition partners have identified key messages to focus on while explaining the value of Medicaid expansion to South Dakota. These messages provide background information on Medicaid expansion and are based on questions we've been getting from individuals across the state who want to learn more about Medicaid expansion.

Key Messaging Tips

- Describe who currently has access to Medicaid in South Dakota – including seniors in nursing homes, people with disabilities, and low-income children and families – and who doesn't qualify, namely people who are low-income without other qualifications.
- 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 cannot afford their employer-sponsored health care plans or who cannot afford insurance through the Marketplace and need Medicaid to help them access health care and avoid catastrophic medical bills.
- Share that our federal taxes are being spent in the 38 other states that have already chosen to expand Medicaid, and that it's time to bring our tax dollars back home to South Dakota.

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. 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.

- Voting to expand Medicaid would allow 42,500 South Dakotans to get physicals, treat medical conditions, and access life-saving cancer screenings.
- Individuals making less than \$18,000 per year, or families of four making less than \$37,000 per year, would be eligible for Medicaid.
- Expanding Medicaid is a good deal for South Dakota. The federal government will pay 90% of the costs of expanding Medicaid to cover low-income parents and adults.
- Expanding now will save the state over \$63 million in the first two years alone.
- Medicaid expansion will bring an estimated \$1.3 billion in federal tax dollars back to South Dakota.
- Rural hospitals across the state are at risk of closing due to financial strain. Expanding Medicaid would allow hospitals to get paid through Medicaid instead of taking a loss on uncompensated care.
- 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.

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.
- In 2022, an estimated 5,370 people in South Dakota will be diagnosed with cancer. Having access to health care and routine screenings can mean the difference between a Stage I diagnosis and a Stage IV diagnosis.
- A recent study by the American Cancer Society showed that newly diagnosed cancer patients have a better survival rate if they live in a state that has already expanded Medicaid.

Medicaid's Role in Addressing Health Disparities in Rural Communities

- Rural hospitals across the state are at risk of closing. Expanding Medicaid would allow hospitals to get paid through Medicaid instead of taking a loss on uncompensated care.
- South Dakota has the highest rate of rural and small town uninsurance in the country. Expanding Medicaid would reduce disparities by decreasing the rural uninsured rate.

Medicaid's Role in Addressing Health Disparities in Native American Communities

- Expanding Medicaid will create new opportunities for Native American residents to access health care outside of Indian Health Service (IHS) facilities.
- Medicaid funding supplements IHS dollars so the facilities can increase and expand care options for their patients.

Messages to Defend Medicaid Expansion

- Taxpayers are left to foot the bill when people cannot afford 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. Expanding Medicaid would allow hospitals to get paid through Medicaid instead of taking a loss on uncompensated care.
- Since 2014, states have had the option of expanding Medicaid. Right now, we are paying taxes for services we are not receiving, as 38 other states including North Dakota, Idaho, and Montana take advantage of this opportunity.

Messages to Explain the Importance of a Constitutional Amendment

- South Dakotans are going to make their voices heard on this in November.
- Other states that passed Medicaid expansion without enshrining it in the constitution have faced challenges with implementation of the law or seen attacks and sabotage from the legislature to undermine the will of the people. Using South Dakota's constitutional amendment initiative process provides protection and will ensure that the voters' choice is respected.
- This is so important to the health and well-being of South Dakotans and South Dakota that we can't risk politicians trying to chop and change it.
- South Dakota voters are going to send a clear message about what they want and we want to make sure they are able to access what they vote for.

Telling Your Story

Many of us have experience with a lack of access to healthcare – as a patient, a provider, or a member of the community. Maybe you know people who cannot afford health care coverage because the cost of private insurance is out of reach and South Dakota has not yet expanded Medicaid. Or, you may have seen the struggles of rural hospital and health workforce in your community and know that Medicaid expansion could make a difference. Whatever the connection, ensuring access to health care plays an important role in the health of our families, communities, and economy.

Telling stories about the impact of the lack of access to health care 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 conversation with a family member or colleague who might not see the importance of Medicaid expansion
- A social media post, inviting others to share why access to health care is crucial 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 lack of access to health care impacts real people in your community. Be sure to explain why Medicaid expansion 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.

Where to Find More Information About the Campaign

- More information, including other stories from around the country and materials to stay involved can be found on the campaign website: www.fightcancer.org/medicaidexpansionsd
- Make sure to follow ACS CAN on Facebook and Twitter so that you stay up to date on local events and even more content. And sign up to receive email updates from ACS CAN at the campaign website: www.fightcancer.org/actions/sign-petition-support-medicaid-expansion-south-dakota
- ACS CAN is a part of South Dakotans Decide Healthcare, a broad coalition of patient advocates, nurses, healthcare providers, farmers, faith leaders, educators, and more. It is one of the broadest coalitions to ever launch a ballot measure campaign in South Dakota history. To learn more, visit www.southdakotansdecide.org.