


MEDICAID & DV SURVIVORS

WORK REQUIREMENTS DON'T WORK



Access to health care is vital for survivors of domestic violence and their children. It helps them heal from injuries and address both the short and often long-term health needs associated with violence and abuse. For a significant number of women and children who experience violence and abuse, Medicaid is their only means of getting health care. If Congress imposes work requirements as a condition to receiving Medicaid, many survivors and their children will suffer as they will likely lose their access to health care.

Domestic violence, often called intimate partner violence or IPV, is prevalent throughout the United States. More than 40 percent of women report physical abuse by an intimate partner in their lifetime with 1 in 3 women experiencing severe physical violence. IPV happens everywhere, regardless of socioeconomic status or gender, but its impacts fall disproportionately on women, people with low incomes, people with disabilities and people of certain racial and ethnic groups who also make up a high portion of the Medicaid-eligible population.



Survivors of intimate partner violence rely on Medicaid every day to escape abuse and to address their and their children's health care needs.

Being a victim of violence can take a serious toll on one's health. Beyond the injuries associated with physical or sexual abuse, violence and trauma contribute to lifelong health conditions like traumatic brain injury, chronic pain, obesity, and heart attacks. The mental and behavioral health effects of violence and abuse are well-documented.

For survivors who need to leave an abusive partner, Medicaid is an important factor. Access to health care, food and other basic needs can be critical in their decision-making and can be life-saving for those experiencing severe physical violence or whose children are also being abused. In addition, Medicaid covers the benefits that survivors and their children need. Medicaid's range of services include prevention, treatment for the health consequences of abuse, mental and behavioral health, substance use services and two-generational support. While the specific benefits vary from state to state, Medicaid covers screening and brief counseling for intimate partner violence (IPV), mental and behavioral health services, substance use services, prescription drugs, annual well-woman visits, and emergency room services. In addition, Medicaid helps to link survivors to other services, like housing support and food pantries.

Medicaid helps children too. Along with covering more than 40 percent of all births, nearly half of all children in the United States get health care through Medicaid. Medicaid also covers mental health services for children and youth in schools, which may be the only place a child in an abusive home can get help. Cuts to Medicaid as a result of new paperwork requirements will force many states to cut back on services provided.

Medicaid work requirements will harm survivors and their children.

The recently passed budget bill in the House of Representatives would impose work requirements and complex proof of work reporting requirements on many adults as a condition for receiving Medicaid and other health care supports. This is a short-sighted policy decision that will harm survivors and their children.

To comprehend the harm, it's important to understand the power dynamics that occur in an abusive relationship. Unfortunately, in many abusive situations, the abusive partner exerts power and control over all aspects of the survivor's life. All too often the abuser will bar the survivor from getting a job or pursuing her education. Thus, the imposition of work requirements on Medicaid recipients would mean that survivors will lose their access to critical health care services that they need.

For those survivors who have fled an abusive relationship and no longer live with their abusers, work requirements are burdensome and ignore the challenges that survivors face every day. These challenges include safety and security concerns, housing and financial instability, childcare needs, and mental health and substance use issues.

- **Safety and Security Concerns:** Survivors will prioritize their safety and that of their children, which can mean relocating to a new area, helping children adjust to new schools, seeking legal protection from their abuser, securing custody of their children, and attending court hearings. Addressing these safety issues takes time and energy and can interfere with employment interviews as well as job responsibilities.
- **Housing and Financial Instability:** Survivors often leave an abusive relationship with little money and few resources. Without financial means, they often experience food and housing insecurity. All too often, survivors and their children experience homelessness. In addition, they often have gaps in their education and work history. These conditions make it hard for survivors to find and maintain employment, as well as have the time or paperwork necessary to prove they are working. It is important to reiterate that most "able bodied adults" on Medicaid do work but the new requirements that force one to continually prove how many hours they are working and where will be particularly burdensome on someone fleeing abuse, living in a shelter or short term housing, or experiencing homelessness.
- **Childcare Needs:** For survivors with young children, finding affordable and reliable childcare is almost impossible. Without dependable and reasonably priced childcare, survivors will not be able to seek and hold a job.
- **Mental Health and Substance Use:** Survivors may experience mental health challenges and substance use disorder as a result of the trauma they experienced. These conditions can further impact their ability to work, and it is indeed the provision of health care that would allow them to heal and maintain work.

These challenges are reduced if survivors and their children have access to health insurance like Medicaid. Medicaid can keep them mentally and physically well, so they are able to address these barriers, get a job, and move forward. Without Medicaid, they are at risk of delaying care, getting sicker, and are one illness/accident away from a financial crisis.

For additional information about the impact of work requirements on survivors, please contact Karen Herrling at kherrling@futureswithoutviolence.org or Kiersten Stewart at kstewart@futureswithoutviolence.org.