

Continuous care benefits the health of our communities

Written by Jeff Smith, State Senator District 31
Wednesday, 26 October 2022 06:47

<http://newiproggressive.com/images/stories/S5/healthcare-family-dr-s440.jpg>



The freeze on disenrolling patients from Medicaid will end when the federal public health emergency does. If you are a BadgerCare patient, it is important that you make sure your contact information is correct to ensure continued health coverage in the months to come.

MADISON - The events of the past several years have shown us again and again the importance of quality, affordable and accessible healthcare. In those first uncertain days of the COVID-19 pandemic, Congress passed the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA). The law contained a “continuous care requirement,” offering expanded federal funding for Medicaid if states put a freeze on disenrolling Medicaid recipients for the duration of the public health emergency.

Since January 2020, the federal public health emergency has been renewed 11 times. Most recently, it was extended for an additional 90 days, now lasting through at least January 11th, 2023. The Department of Health has committed to giving the states 60 days’ notice at the time that they decide not to extend the public health emergency.

Still, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services have begun warning states to prepare for an eventual return to pre-pandemic eligibility rules. States have 12 months following the declared end of the public health emergency to transition back to pre-pandemic operation, called “unwinding”.

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For the past years, as we've endured a massive public health emergency, continuity of coverage helped to curtail the worst effects of the pandemic. When eligibility standards do return to pre-pandemic levels, the Department of Health estimates that up to 15 million Americans will be disenrolled between Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

While some will lose health insurance because they no longer qualify, the Department estimates that almost half of those that will lose health insurance will be disenrolled for purely procedural reasons. If you are covered through BadgerCare, check today to ensure that your contact information – address, phone number and email – are correct in the ACCESS web system so that the state can inform you of any changes to your coverage. You can check your current contact information here: <https://access.wisconsin.gov/access/>

BadgerCare recipients are required to report any changes to their income, assets, medical expenses, household size or new employment to the state within 10 days. These can also be reported in the ACCESS web system. Any changes you make will not impact your eligibility for BadgerCare until the end of the public health emergency, so do not worry that you will be disenrolled without warning.

After the public health emergency has ended, but before making any changes to your coverage, agency staff will ask for an update on your current situation. Ensure that your contact information is correct and sign up to receive emails and/or texts from BadgerCare to stay informed about the status of your eligibility.

Some of the changes we made to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic showed us ways we can

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provide better coverage for Wisconsinites going forward. In response to the successful utilization of telehealth programs to provide folks with coverage remotely, the Wisconsin Legislature recently passed legislation requiring Medicaid to cover telehealth procedures under certain circumstances.

Another opportunity to maximize our positive impact on healthcare outcomes is Medicaid expansion. While the majority of states have accepted Medicaid expansion, Wisconsin has not. A recent poll commissioned by the American Cancer Society found that 70% of Wisconsinites support expanding BadgerCare.



By refusing Medicaid expansion, Wisconsin is turning down well over a billion dollars in federal funding. This funding would be a game changer in Wisconsin's healthcare system, money that could be used to reimburse providers fairly and provide additional support for needy populations. I will continue to advocate as your State Senator for expanded access to healthcare for all, including continued investment in telehealth and Medicaid expansion.

The best way to reduce the spread of disease and ensure community health is to keep folks enrolled in health insurance. If you are covered by BadgerCare, please make sure that your information is correct, and check in with friends and family to make sure that they're covered too. When a member of our community is able to access quality healthcare, it improves community health across the board.