

Medicaid Matters

U.S. Supreme Court rules much of ACA is constitutional States to have option on Medicaid expansion without penalty

After weeks of anxious waiting, Alabama officials finally learned that while much of the Affordable Care Act has been ruled constitutional, states cannot be penalized if they choose to not expand their Medicaid programs to all individuals below 138% of the federal poverty level.

The ruling, issued by the U.S. Supreme Court on June 28, upheld much of the ACA, but left the decision on expanding Medicaid to state officials. If states agree to expand their Medicaid programs, they will receive the enhanced federal funding and be subject to all requirements



associated with the expansion as outlined in the law. However, they cannot lose all of their federal Medicaid funds if they elect to not expand their programs.

“We don’t know that the state can afford it,” said Alabama Governor Robert Bentley. “We have serious concerns about the increased costs associated with expanding entitlement programs, but we need to understand the larger implications of the ruling as a whole before deciding the best course of action.”

State Health Officer Dr. Don Williamson, appointed by Governor Bentley to chair the Medicaid Transition Task Force, emphasized that cost will be a major consideration when the governor and legislature make that decision.

“The decision to expand or not expand is a decision that the governor working with the legislature would make. We’ve said all along that the cost of that expansion is one everybody is very concerned about,” Williamson said. “We’re talking about costs that will be in the hundreds of millions of dollars by the end of the decade,” Williamson said.

Beginning in 2017, the state would have to contribute 5 percent of the cost for benefits provided to the new eligibles which would increase to 10 percent in 2020 and subsequent years. Williamson also noted that there will be significant administrative costs to certify, enroll and manage the new recipients which will not be covered by federal dollars.



Dr. Williamson discusses Supreme Court ACA ruling.

A projection developed by the Lister Hill Center for Health Policy at the University of Alabama at Birmingham estimates 360,000 currently uninsured individuals would qualify for the expanded program and an additional 165,000 people would be eligible to switch from private coverage to the expanded Medicaid program.



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State of Alabama honored by CMS for efforts to improve child health

The State of Alabama is one of four states recently honored for its leadership efforts to improve children's health care, including oral health care, by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Alabama was recognized at the 2nd Annual CMS Medicaid-CHIP Quality Conference in Baltimore where Medicaid Assistant Medical Director Dr. Melinda Rowe and Chris Sellers, ALL Kids Director of Data and Evaluation, accepted the award on behalf of the state.

Along with Vermont, Washington and West Virginia, Alabama was cited for the collective efforts of Medicaid and ALL Kids to encourage children to access needed health care services and to track and report on quality measures related to children's dental care. Criteria for the award included above average performance in terms of EPSDT-eligible children receiving preventive dental services, reporting on dental quality measures, and the accuracy and quality of a database used to link children to needed dental services. The initiative is part of the CMS Oral Health Initiative which has as its goal to increase the proportion of children in Medicaid and CHIP who receive a preventive dental service by ten percentage points by 2015.



"We greatly appreciate your dedication to serving and building capacity for measuring and reporting information toward improving health care for children in Medicaid and CHIP," said CMS Chief Quality Officer Marsha Lillie-Blanton. "You are a valued partner in our three-part aim to improve care, improve health and through improvement, lower health care costs."

Online health IT training available, deadline to apply July 26

Alabama residents with verified experience and/or education in health care or information technology may qualify to participate in a FREE online course to become certified in one of the six federally-designated Health IT workforce roles. Workforce roles include: Practice Workflow and Information Management Redesign Specialist, Clinician/Practitioner Consultant, Implementation Support Specialist, Implementation Manager, Technical/Software Support Staff and Trainer.

Offered by Itawamba Community College in Tupelo, Mississippi, the intensive, non-degree program is designed to provide a qualified pool of workers with both a medical body of knowledge and an IT body of knowledge to ensure the adoption of electronic health records (EHRs). ICC is one of many institutions in the country participating in the federally-funded Community College Consortia to Education Health Information Technology Professionals, sponsored by the Office of the National Coordinator (ONC). ICC is one of three institutions serving Alabama.



The course is provided at no cost to the student. Students who complete the course will receive a free voucher (value \$299) for the ONC HITPro exam which is taken online at an independent testing center. [Read more >>](#)

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