



Overview of LCS Publications on Medicaid

By Legislative Council Staff

This issue brief summarizes publications on Medicaid that Legislative Council Staff (LCS) has prepared in the last five years.

Medicaid is a joint federal and state insurance program that provides health care coverage to low-income families and individuals, including children, pregnant people, seniors, and people with disabilities. The federal government establishes general rules and policies for Medicaid, including required services and eligible populations, and each state administers its own Medicaid program.

Within federal rules and with federal approval, states have the flexibility to cover certain optional services, expand coverage to additional populations, and offer unique services to targeted populations. As such, Medicaid programs vary considerably from state to state.

An Overview of Colorado's Medicaid Program

Colorado's Medicaid program, known as Health First Colorado, is administered by the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF). This memorandum details the program, including its history, governing structures, coverage and eligibility, and Medicaid benefits and services, as well as

Medicaid funding and the process for making changes to state Medicaid programs.

Medicaid Impacts from the One Big Beautiful Bill Act

The federal H.R. 1 (2025), also known as the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, spans a wide range of policy domains, including Medicaid. This memorandum details changes to the Medicaid program, which are the largest changes since the Affordable Care Act in 2010. These changes fall within three primary categories:

- coverage and eligibility;
- financing and budgeting; and
- administration.

Regional Accountable Entities

HCPF contracts with Regional Accountable Entities to coordinate physical and behavioral health care for Medicaid members. This issue brief provides an overview of Regional Accountable Entities, including their creation and purpose, health care networks, payment structure, incentives, and monitoring.

Adding Benefits Under Medicaid

The federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services set standards for state Medicaid programs to receive federal financial participation. HCPF may initiate the process to

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create or revise a Medicaid benefit at any time, such as in response to legislation. This issue brief summarizes the state and federal processes for HCPF to create or revise benefits under Medicaid.

Health Care Prior Authorization Practices

Prior authorization—sometimes referred to as preauthorization or precertification—is a process by which an insurer reviews a request for health care services or drugs before consenting to cover the costs of the proposed treatment. Upon receiving a request, an insurer can approve or deny the request, or request additional information from the patient or their health care provider. This issue brief provides an overview of the prior authorization practices used by health insurers, including private health insurance carriers and public insurers such as Medicaid.

Medicaid Appeals in Colorado: Data on Prior Authorization Denials, Appeals, and Outcomes

Under current law, HCPF is required to inform Health First Colorado applicants and members in writing at least ten days before denying, approving, terminating, or changing their eligibility for medical assistance benefits. Members have the right to appeal these decisions if they believe the action was incorrect, the application for services was improperly denied, or the application was not addressed in the required time frame. Using

data from HCPF, this memorandum reviews the number of denials of prior authorization requests, the number of annual Medicaid appeals, and the outcomes of those appeals. It concludes with resources for filing an appeal.

Medicaid Waiver Programs: Waivers for Children

Colorado currently administers ten Home- and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Medicaid Waivers. This issue brief discusses the four waivers available to children:

- Children’s HCBS Waiver;
- Children’s Extensive Support Waiver;
- Children with Life-Limiting Illness Waiver; and
- Children’s Habilitation Residential Program Waiver.

Medicaid Waiver Programs: Waivers for Adults

Of the ten HCBS Waivers that Colorado currently administers, this issue brief discusses the six waivers available to adults:

- Persons with Brain Injury Waiver;
- Community Mental Health Supports Waiver;
- Persons who are Elderly, Blind, and Disabled Waiver;
- Complementary and Integrative Health Waiver;
- Supported Living Services Waiver; and
- Persons with Developmental Disabilities Waiver.