



Millions at risk of losing Medicaid coverage as pandemic provisions scale back

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WASHINGTON (TND) — Thousands of Medicaid recipients have lost their healthcare coverage and millions more may follow them shortly.

Medicaid provides health care coverage to more than 86 million Americans, including eligible low-income adults, children, pregnant women, seniors, and people with disabilities.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the federal government increased funding for states so that everybody who had Medicaid could stay on it. The government is scaling back those funds and states are going back to their normal Medicaid eligibility processes.

As states unwind the continuous enrollment provision over the following 12 months, they will redetermine eligibility for all Medicaid enrollees and will disenroll those who are no longer eligible or who may remain eligible but are unable to complete the renewal process," the Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) explained on their [website](#).

According to the foundation, 17 million people could lose Medicaid coverage within the next year.

Over one million have already been disenrolled as of June 12, 2023.

“So we're now going back to the normal process, and you have to remember that a lot of people who are on the Medicaid rolls really shouldn't be there. They may have passed away. They may have moved to another state. They may have gotten a very high-paying job and can afford private insurance," said Marc Joffe, policy analyst for Cato Institute. "The idea that we would just never review anyone's eligibility. I think it should be pretty shocking for anyone who's concerned with fiscal discipline in the United States.”

Florida has disenrolled the most Medicaid recipients so far with nearly 250,000.

Not all states have started their unwinding processes. For example, Oregon won't start until October.

Arkansas Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders' administration has given state Medicaid recipients six months to verify their eligibility and renew enrollment half the time allotted by the federal government and the shortest timeline out of all 50 states in the country.

At a recent Arkansas Community Organization (ACO) rally, Medicaid recipients expressed their frustration over the state's Medicaid system and called for more time before unwinding the COVID-19 provision.

I have had issues back in the past of trying to be renewed on my Medicaid," said Michele Perrian, a rallygoer. "They have glitches in the system. They messed my daughter up because they said that she was foreign because her name is Selena. She's not foreign and I didn't put that there. So I had to go up there and let them know, 'Who did this?' They said 'I'm sorry, I'm so sorry, it was a glitch in the system.' Really?

"Give people a year, don't kick people off now. Let's get it right. Fix the glitches. People need the healthcare," said Neil Sealy, a Community Organization with the ACO.

Nearly 80,000 Arkansans have already been disenrolled by Arkansas' Medicaid agency, and the ACO estimates that about 400,000 will ultimately lose their benefits.

"States usually don't make it that difficult to enroll in the system," Joffe said. "Ninety million people have enrolled in Medicaid. So it shouldn't be that difficult to stay on the system if, in fact, they are qualified."

Nearly \$730 billion was spent on Medicaid in the United States back in 2021.