

# **The Medicaid Expansion (HELP Act): How it is Reducing Financial Barriers and Improving Access to Essential Health Services in Montana**

**January 22, 2019**



## **Acknowledgements:**

We would like to thank and acknowledge Executive Vice President Dr. David Dutwin, Associate Research Director Ms. Margie Engle-Bauer, and the staff from SSRS for assisting in the design and conducting the telephone survey.

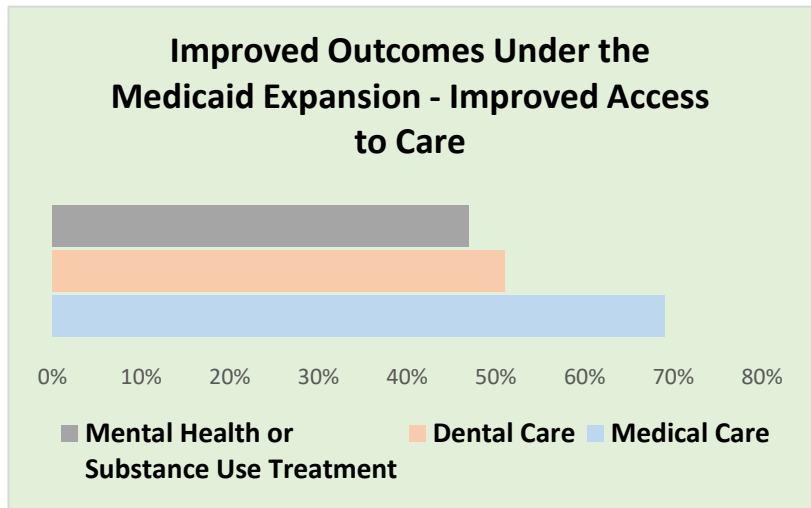
The analysis of this survey was funded by the Montana Healthcare Foundation. The Public Health and Safety Division of the Department of Public Health and Human Services is solely responsible for the statements and conclusions included in the analysis of this survey.

# The Medicaid Expansion (HELP Act): How it is Reducing Financial Barriers and Improving Access to Essential Health Services in Montana

In 2018, a survey of Medicaid Expansion (HELP Act) enrollees was conducted, to assess Medicaid Expansion member access to health care services and their health status prior to and after enrolling in the Medicaid Expansion. This document contains a summarization of the survey results.

## Major Findings

- Nearly half of respondents (43%) reported improved general health since enrollment in Medicaid Expansion.
- Most respondents reported that enrollment in Medicaid Expansion improved their ability to get medical (69%) and dental (51%) care. Nearly half (47%) reported that the Medicaid Expansion improved their ability to get needed mental health and substance use treatment services.



- Nine out of 10 respondents (90%) reported that it would be difficult to pay for medical or dental services if they were not covered by the Medicaid Expansion.
- Three-quarters of respondents (75%) reported that without the Medicaid Expansion, they would have difficulty paying for basic housing needs or food.
- During the year prior to enrolling in Medicaid, 64% of respondents reported having to wait to seek medical/dental care due to costs. Similarly, 45% reported taking less medication than prescribed, due to costs, and 50% reported having to borrow money or skip paying bills because of medical/dental costs.

## Respondent characteristics

Most respondents were female (54%) and non-Hispanic Caucasian (70%), while 16% were American Indian. Thirty-three percent of respondents were 19 to 29 years of age, 27% were 30 to 39 years of age, 17% were 40 to 49 years of age and 23% were 50 to 64 years of age. Five percent of respondents were veterans, which would indicate that approximately 3,900 veterans are enrolled in Medicaid Expansion.

# The Medicaid Expansion (HELP Act): How it is Reducing Financial Barriers and Improving Access to Essential Health Services in Montana

## Background and Methods

A telephone survey of Medicaid Expansion enrollees was conducted by national research firm SSRS between November 12 and December 10, 2018. Medicaid expansion enrollees aged 18 to 64 years and enrolled for six or more months were randomly selected to be called for the survey; a total of 78,349 enrollees were eligible for the survey. A total of 753 individuals responded to the survey. **The goal of the survey was to assess Medicaid Expansion members access to health care services and their health status prior to and after enrolling in Medicaid Expansion.**

Data were weighted by age, sex, and race so that the percentages reported are representative of the Medicaid Expansion population eligible for the survey. Reported percentages do not include missing responses, respondents who refused to answer the question, or respondents who reported “Don’t Know/Not Sure” or “Not applicable, have not tried to get care/did not need care.”

**Table 1 – Percent of “Yes” responses among Medical Expansion enrollees, aged 18 to 64 years, enrolled in Medicaid Expansion for six months or more, 2018 Medicaid Expansion survey.**

Survey question	Percentage of Respondents who answered “Yes”
<b>Since enrolling in Medicaid Expansion my...</b>	
Ability to get medical care improved	69%
Ability to get dental care improved	51%
Ability to get mental health or substance use treatment services improved	47%
General health improved	43%
<b>If not covered by Medicaid Expansion, it would be difficult for me to pay for...</b>	
Hospitalizations or emergency room visits	94%
Dental care	91%
Doctor visits	90%
Prescription medications	88%
Basic housing needs (rent or mortgage, heat, electricity, or water)	77%
Food for myself or my family	75%
<b>Prior to Medicaid Expansion enrollment, I...</b>	
Waited to seek medical/dental care because I could not afford it	64%
Borrowed money or skipped paying bills because of medical/dental costs	50%
Took less medication than prescribed because I could not afford it	45%

# The Medicaid Expansion (HELP Act): How it is Reducing Financial Barriers and Improving Access to Essential Health Services in Montana

## Appendix: Medicaid Expansion Survey Results by Question

<b>During the year prior to enrolling in Medicaid, did you wait to seek medical or dental care or choose not to seek care because you could not afford it?</b>	
Yes	64%
No	36%
<b>During the year prior to enrolling in Medicaid, did you end up taking less medication than was prescribed for you because you couldn't afford it?</b>	
Yes	45%
No	55%
<b>During the year prior to enrolling in Medicaid, did you either borrow money, or skip paying medical or dental bills, or skip paying other bills, as a result of medical or dental costs?</b>	
Yes	50%
No	50%
<b>Compared to the year prior to enrolling in Medicaid, would you say your general health has improved, stayed the same, or gotten worse?</b>	
Improved	43%
Stayed the same	43%
Gotten worse	13%
<b>Since enrolling in Medicaid, would you say your ability to get the medical care that you need has improved, stayed the same, or gotten worse?</b>	
Improved	69%
Stayed the same	26%
Gotten worse	5%
<b>Since enrolling in Medicaid, would you say your ability to get the dental care that you need has improved, stayed the same, or gotten worse?</b>	
Improved	51%
Stayed the same	38%
Gotten worse	11%
<b>Since enrolling in Medicaid, would you say your ability to get the mental health or substance use treatment services that you need has improved, stayed the same, or gotten worse?</b>	
Improved	47%
Stayed the same	47%
Gotten worse	7%
<b>How difficult, if at all, do you think it would be to pay for each of the following if you were not covered through Medicaid.</b>	
<b>a. Visits with a doctor or another healthcare provide?</b>	
Very difficult	62%
Somewhat difficult	28%
Not too difficult	6%
Not at all difficult	4%
<b>b. Dental care?</b>	
Very difficult	72%
Somewhat difficult	19%
Not too difficult	5%

## The Medicaid Expansion (HELP Act): How it is Reducing Financial Barriers and Improving Access to Essential Health Services in Montana

Not at all difficult	4%
<b>c. Prescription medications?</b>	
Very difficult	62%
Somewhat difficult	26%
Not too difficult	6%
Not at all difficult	6%
<b>d. A hospitalization or emergency room visit?</b>	
Very difficult	85%
Somewhat difficult	10%
Not too difficult	3%
Not at all difficult	3%
<b>e. Basic housing needs, such as rent or a mortgage, heat, electricity, or water?</b>	
Very difficult	46%
Somewhat difficult	31%
Not too difficult	14%
Not at all difficult	9%
<b>f. Food for yourself or your family?</b>	
Very difficult	43%
Somewhat difficult	32%
Not too difficult	14%
Not at all difficult	11%

### Data Notes

- Due to rounding, not all percentages add up to 100%.
- Data were weighted by age, sex, and race so that the percentages reported are representative of the Medicaid Expansion population eligible for the survey.
- Reported percentages do not include missing responses, respondents who refused to answer the question, or respondents who reported “Don’t Know/Not Sure” or “Not applicable, have not tried to get care/did not need care.”
- A more detailed methods report (including response rate) will be forthcoming from SSRS by March 1, 2019