



CONGRESS IS TRYING TO CUT MEDICAID – ACT NOW!

Impacts on Georgians with Disabilities

Your Freedom and Independence are being Threatened!

People with disabilities who prefer to live in their community will be forced into nursing facilities, waiting lists for services will grow and eligibility for critical services will be further restricted if Congress passes the new American Health Care Act (AHCA). While there is no way to be certain what Georgia will do under a per capita cap system, we know there will be real life consequences for people with disabilities who need support to live. (See “What might happen if this bill passes?” on the reverse)

What is going on in Washington DC and why you should care!

Policymakers in Washington are asking for big changes to Medicaid that will mean Georgia will get less money for the programs people with disabilities depend on. Many policymakers think Medicaid gets too much money, so their plan limits how much money each state gets for Medicaid. The plan to cut Medicaid is part of a bill called the American Health Care Act (AHCA) and it is moving very fast through Congress.

**1 in 5
Georgians
depend on
Medicaid¹**

What will be cut?

Many policymakers don't understand how many people use the Medicaid program. In Georgia, Medicaid supports almost 2 million people – from babies & children to people with disabilities and older adults¹.

Medicaid is extremely important for Georgians with disabilities. It helps people with disabilities to pay for doctor visits, surgeries, medication, and expensive medical equipment such as wheelchairs and prosthetics. **However, many people do not realize that Medicaid also provides access to services that allow people with disabilities to live and work in their community.** For example, Medicaid helps people with disabilities pay for caregivers for bathing, dressing, and other daily life activities, as well as transportation and employment services, just to name a few².

Many people don't even know that supports they use are funded by Medicaid. (See sidebar) Medicaid dollars even flow into Georgia schools providing children with disabilities needed services such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, mental health therapy, and specialized equipment to name a few.

In fact, the federal government now pays 68.5% of all the services Georgians receive through Medicaid³. That is a lot of money! It represents a big chunk of money that the state of Georgia does not have to pay and cannot afford to pay.

In Georgia Medicaid goes by many different names. For Georgians with disabilities, Medicaid is called:

- Community Care Services Program (CCSP)
- Service Options Using Resources in a Community Environment (SOURCE)
- Independent Care Waiver Program (ICWP)
- New Options Waiver (NOW)
- Comprehensive Supports Waiver (COMP)
- Georgia Pediatric Program (GAPP)
- Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, & Treatment (EPSDT)
- Katie Beckett Program

What is a per capita cap?

Congress wants to cut Medicaid by using something called a Per Capita Cap. People who use Medicaid would be put into different groups. **Everyone with a disability would be placed in the same group and the state would receive a set amount of money to provide services to everyone in that group.** The amount of money for that group will be “capped” or have a limit. The caps do not consider what services a person actually needs to live. They are a one size fits all solution for a very diverse population.

The caps would only increase a small amount each year. **In ten years, the Urban Institute reports that Georgia would lose \$4 billion in federal Medicaid funding**⁵. That is a lot of money to lose! With such a shortfall, there won’t be enough money to go around!

The average annual cost of supporting Georgians in an institutional setting is \$172,280 vs. \$28,901 in the community.⁴

What might happen if this bill passes?

People are worried that if there is less money for Medicaid in Georgia, Georgia could choose to fund fewer programs and services to cut costs. This could mean that a person now receiving services could have their services drastically reduced or even eliminated entirely. Rules could change so some people may no longer be eligible to receive supports.

In fact, the home and community based services (e.g., NOW, COMP, ICWP, CCSP, SOURCE, etc.) on which people with disabilities rely are especially at risk because they are optional for states to provide and could be completely eliminated. This is concerning because in Georgia there are already 10,345 people with disabilities waiting for Medicaid home and community based services. **While community based services are optional, providing care in nursing facilities for those with disabilities is not optional.** Nursing facilities are much more expensive than supporting someone in the community⁴.

TAKE ACTION NOW! Tell your story to the four policymakers listed below.

Educate them on how you use Medicaid. What would happen to you or your loved one if your Medicaid was cut/reduced or eliminated completely?

Contact these
Policymakers with
your Questions!

1. US Senator Johnny Isakson 202-224-3643
2. US Senator David Perdue 202-224-3521
3. Your US Representative in the House: www.govtrack.us
4. Governor Nathan Deal: 404-656-1776

Ask each policymaker a question like:

- How much money will Georgia lose under this proposal now or in future years?
- How will my supports or my program be changed?
- How can you guarantee my level of services won’t change?
- How will Georgia be able to support the same number of people and offer the same services as it does today if it gets less federal money?
- Could Georgia decide to take away some services, like supports in the community, since they are optional under the 1915c Home and Community Based Services waiver?
- What will you do for Georgians that lose care?

If your policymaker does not know the answer to your questions, ask them to find out the answers. You can say you will call them back later.

¹ Harker, Laura. “Planned Medicaid Changes Put State Health System at Risk.” *Georgia Budget & Policy Institute* March 2017

² “Special Education Rules Implementation Manual.” *Georgia Department of Education*.

³ FY 2018 Federal Medical Assistance Percentage(FMAP) for Medicaid and Multiplier, provided by The Henry Kaiser Family Foundation

⁴ The Cost of Deinstitutionalization, National Council on Disability. Available online at <https://ncd.gov/publications/2012/DIToolkit/Costs/inDetail>

⁵ Blumberg, Linda J, Matthew Buettgens, John Holahan, Clare Pan. “The Impact of Per Capita Caps on Federal And State Medicaid Spending.” March 2017. *Urban Institute*

⁶ Obtained from Georgia Department of Community Health. Accurate as of 3/31/17.