

Medicaid & Mental Health Toolkit

More than [52 million adults](#) across the United States are affected by mental illness each year. Mental health conditions have long-lasting consequences, especially for minority populations and underserved communities, who tend to face a [disproportionately high burden](#) of disability from mental health challenges.

Everyone deserves access to effective and affordable mental health support and counseling. As the [single largest payer](#) for mental health services, Medicaid plays a unique role in the lives of Americans with mental health challenges – and it's more important than ever that we continue to strengthen this vital program.

While efforts to address mental health conditions have been a focus in Medicaid at the federal level in recent years, the COVID-19 crisis continues to exacerbate mental health challenges across the country.

Modern Medicaid Alliance partners are stepping up to address these challenges and support those who need it most. The Modern Medicaid Alliance is committed to working together to improve access to mental health support for every patient who needs it, and will work to ensure Medicaid is strong and sustainable to support the millions of Americans who rely on it.

Key statistics about Medicaid and mental health:

- Mental illness impacts nearly [1 in 5 Americans](#) (52.9 million people).
- [10 million Americans](#) with mental health conditions are covered by Medicaid.
- Medicaid is the [single largest payer](#) of services for Americans with mental health conditions.
- Many services to treat [substances use disorder \(SUD\)](#) are covered by Medicaid, including [services](#) like peer support and other programs that support those in recovering from SUD.
- Many states provide [home and community-based services](#) that help people with behavioral health conditions live independently in their communities.
- Americans covered by Medicaid are [much more likely](#) to receive behavioral health treatment than uninsured adults.
- Studies have found that Medicaid expansion [increased access](#) to care for adults with mental health conditions such as depression.

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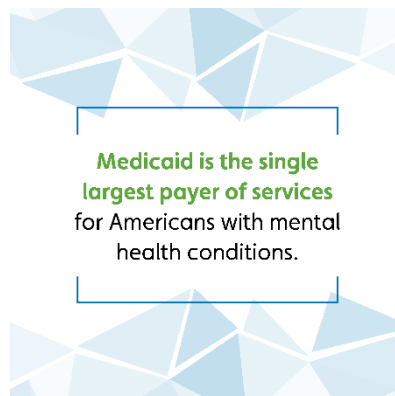
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Template Social Media Posts

We encourage Modern Medicaid Alliance partners to utilize the sample social media posts below to amplify the need to address the current mental health crisis, tailoring as you see fit.

- As the single largest payer for mental health services, Medicaid plays a unique role in the lives of people with mental health challenges – and with the ongoing public health crisis, it’s important we continue to strengthen this vital program now more than ever.
- Medicaid is a critical safety net for 10 million Americans with mental health conditions. We need to ensure a strong and sustainable Medicaid program to address the mental health crisis.
- Mental illness impacts nearly 1 in 5 Americans. Medicaid increases access to mental health services – and is essential for a growing number of Americans to receive the care they need.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the mental health of nearly one in three Americans. The impact of the pandemic on mental health reinforces the need for a strong Medicaid program that offers comprehensive mental health services.
- Medicaid covers a variety of essential mental health services, including counseling and prescription medications. We must ensure that Medicaid is strong and sustainable to provide these services for the millions of Americans who rely on it.

May is Mental Health Awareness Month. Use the hashtags #MHAM and #Together4MH to engage in the conversation



[Click here](#) to download these and other social media graphics.

Top Ten Ways Medicaid Helps Americans with Mental Health Conditions

TOP TEN WAYS MEDICAID HELPS AMERICANS WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

May is National Mental Health Awareness Month, but our partners and other organizations across the country work tirelessly throughout the year to raise awareness around mental health conditions – and why Medicaid is so important to the millions of Americans living with them. Here are the top 10 facts you should know about how Medicaid helps Americans with mental health conditions.



Mental illness impacts nearly 1 in 5 Americans (43.8 million people).¹



10 million Americans with mental health conditions are covered by Medicaid.²



Medicaid pays for services like peer support services and programs that promote productivity.³



Many substance use disorder services are covered by Medicaid, helping people access treatment they need to curb substance abuse and addiction.⁴



Some states provide home and community-based services that help people with mental illnesses live independently in their communities.⁵



Americans covered by Medicaid have much better access to mental health treatment and services than people who are uninsured.⁶

Medicaid is the single largest payer of services for Americans with mental health conditions.⁷



Children in Medicaid are covered by the Early, Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) benefit, which helps to screen and diagnose mental health conditions early in life so they can be properly treated.⁸



More Americans with mental illness are able to obtain and maintain employment thanks to services that offer personal care, transportation and job coaching.⁹



Investments in mental health services by Medicaid help save money for the criminal justice system and local economies, as more Americans are able to get the services they need to stay out of jail and continue working.¹⁰



Promoting Strong Mental Health Services Through Medicaid

As National Mental Health Awareness Month comes to a close, the Modern Medicaid Alliance is taking the opportunity to look back on the work [our partners](#) are doing – not just in May but every day of the year – to support Americans with mental health needs.

Nearly **1 in 5 Americans** lives with a mental health condition, and organizations across the country are raising awareness of those conditions and helping erase the stigma – making it easier for Americans to ask for and receive help when they need.

We're proud that so many of our Modern Medicaid members are active on this important issue, serving the almost **10 million Americans** with diagnosed mental illnesses who rely on Medicaid for their care. We spoke to our Alliance partners about how the program is a crucial lifeline for Americans with mental health needs.

In addition to being the largest health care provider in the country, **Medicaid is the [largest payer of mental health services](#)**. “Medicaid finances a broad range of behavioral health services including medications to treat mental illness and recovery-oriented support services such as counseling, case management, peer support and services in permanent supportive housing,” says Andrew Sperling, Director of Legislative and Policy Advocacy at the [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#).

1 in 5 children experience a mental health issue, yet only **20 percent** receive necessary care – a gap which Medicaid addresses. According to Kelly Vaillancourt Strobach, Director, Policy and Advocacy, at the [National Association of School Psychologists](#), “Medicaid covers comprehensive mental and behavioral health services including early identification and early intervention services.”

Unfortunately for the millions who rely on Medicaid, many programs face threats to funding or adjustments that could severely limit services. “Cuts to Medicaid would mean cuts to critical mental health services... To best serve Americans, Medicaid needs to be built on, not stripped down,” says Nathaniel Counts, Associate Vice President of Policy at [Mental Health America](#).

Sperling agrees, “When reductions to Medicaid limit access to treatment and services for beneficiaries living with mental illness it creates enormous challenges at the community level.”

Schools would also face tremendous difficulty, as Medicaid serves as a critical resource for our nation's vulnerable children and youth, according to Strobach: “Schools are particularly vulnerable to Medicaid cuts, and recent data gathered by AASA shows that cuts to Medicaid funding could lead to a reduction in services to students.”

As we recognize Mental Health Awareness Month this year, join us. Help us educate policymakers and the public about the tremendous role that Medicaid plays in treating mental illness in our communities.

[View the Modern Medicaid Alliance's blog post here.](#)

Modern Medicaid Alliance Partners Provide Mental Health Support Throughout COVID-19

In recognition of May as [National Mental Health Month](#), the Modern Medicaid Alliance is showcasing both Medicaid's critical role in providing mental health services for enrollees and the work of our partners to provide supportive services and reduce the stigma around mental illness.

Nearly [52 million adults](#) across the U.S. are affected by mental illness each year, and Medicaid is the [single largest payer](#) for mental health services in the country, serving [26%](#) of all adults living with a serious mental health disease.

This year, the observance carries added significance as communities work to recover from the COVID-19 crisis and the additional challenges that impact health and wellness, including isolation and increased stress.

Addressing Behavioral Health Challenges

Centene Corporation [announced](#) its support for National Mental Health Month through several initiatives that empower providers and individuals to address behavioral health challenges, including substance use disorder (SUD).

The organization is committed to providing solutions to help individuals overcome behavioral health challenges and resulting conditions such as SUD. Centene is continuing to offer support through a number of programs and partnerships, including:

- Centene OpiEnd, an evidence-based program that uses predictive modeling to identify members at high risk of developing an opioid addiction and connect them with care providers.
- Partnership with [YWCA](#) to engage teenage girls from low-income families, especially communities of color, to teach them about the impacts of trauma and develop relationship and leadership skills.
- Suicide Safer Care Program, a program developed in collaboration with the Association of Clinicians for the Underserved and Concert Health to provide trainings to health centers on evidence-based practices for suicide prevention in primary care.

Delivering Mental and Behavioral Health Services in Schools

School psychologists are uniquely trained to deliver high-quality mental and behavioral health services in schools to ensure all students have the support they need to be successful in school, at home, and throughout life.

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) offers various resources to highlight the problem with unaddressed mental health needs in schools and how school psychologists can help provide services. A recently updated white paper from NASP — "[School Psychologists: Qualified Health Professionals Providing Child and Adolescent Mental and Behavioral Health Services](#)" — showcases the expertise of school psychologists in meeting the needs of children and adolescents throughout the country.

Disseminating Best Practices

Throughout the month, Mental Health America (MHA) has hosted “[Advocacy Mondays](#)” to provide virtual opportunities for advocates to learn about the issues they care about most and take information to officials, community leaders, and loved ones. Each week, MHA highlighted different topics related to mental and behavioral health:

- May 3 – 8 – COVID-19 Relief Funding and Workplace Mental Health
- May 10 – 14 – Maternal and Perinatal Mental Health
- May 17 – 21 – Crisis Services and Suicide Prevention
- May 24 – 28 – Peer Support and Equity

Supporting Youth Mental Health

In 2019, Blue Shield of California launched the [BlueSky Initiative](#) to enhance access, awareness, and advocacy of youth mental health supports in collaboration with the California Department of Education and leading nonprofit organizations. BlueSky supports California youth mental health by providing access to clinicians in middle and high schools, training educators on the signs of mental health issues, and empowering youth with in-person and online mental health support resources.

The initiative recently partnered with DoSomething.org to launch a first-of-its-kind [digital mental health guide for youth](#), created for youth by youth. The guide provides young people with peer-to-peer tips on self-care, managing stress from digital learning during the pandemic, and supporting the mental health of fellow classmates.

While COVID-19 has exacerbated mental health challenges across the country, Modern Medicaid Alliance partners are stepping up to help those in need. The Modern Medicaid Alliance and our partners will continue to develop and share resources for addressing mental illness, and work to ensure Medicaid is strong and sustainable to continue covering mental health services for a growing number of Americans.

[View the Modern Medicaid Alliance blog post here.](#)

How Blue Shield of California is Supporting Youth Mental Health

While the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated mental health illnesses for children nationwide, research points to an increasing prevalence of adolescent mental health illness even prior to the pandemic. From 2008 to 2018, depression increased by [nearly twofold](#) for children ages 12-17. In California, mental illness is the [number 1 reason](#) that children are hospitalized.

As the [largest payer](#) of mental health services in the U.S., Medicaid serves as a major source of coverage for adolescents (age 12-17) with significant mental health conditions, covering [one in five adolescents](#) who have experienced a major depressive episode. With roughly [40%](#) of children in California covered by Medicaid or “Medi-Cal”, the program provides vital access to the care and services needed to help address children’s mental health.

Given [half of all lifetime cases](#) of mental illness or substance abuse begin by age 14, ensuring that mental health conditions are addressed as early as possible is a significant part of healthy development for children and youth. For many children, schools often serve as one of the first places where mental health conditions are identified and diagnosed, in large part due to Medi-Cal’s [Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment \(EPSDT\)](#) benefit.

Blue Shield of California is helping increase access, awareness, and advocacy for mental health support for California youth through their [BlueSky Initiative](#). Launched in 2019, the BlueSky Initiative boosts access to mental health support for youth in two ways: funding school and community programs, and providing educational resources for educators and parents.

BlueSky’s program includes providing access to clinicians in middle and high schools, training educators to spot signs of mental health issues, empowering students with culturally affirming mental health support resources, and supporting career development for professionals pursuing careers in mental health. In just a few years, BlueSky has increased access to mental health across 20 middle and high schools in California — conducting nearly [8,000 individual, family and group sessions](#). In the 2020-2021 school year, participating students reported increases in their affective strengths (22%), interpersonal strengths (21%), and school functioning (11%).

Additionally, in September 2021, BlueSky announced a new contribution of [\\$1 million](#) to help the California Department of Education expand access to mental health services even further, including tailoring mental health care to be more affirming of the experiences of BIPOC youth (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color). This funding will also help support the creation of a statewide Medi-Cal technical assistance guide that Local Education Agencies can leverage to help more families access mental and behavioral health benefits.

Blue Shield Promise President and CEO Kristen Cerf said, “[BlueSky is] a new model of collaboration between school districts, nonprofit organizations, and a managed care plan that addresses mental health needs of youth in the communities that we serve and gives them tools to develop resilience, regardless of insurance eligibility.”

These critical mental health innovations resulted in Blue Shield of California Promise Health Plan, a subsidiary of Blue Shield of California, being awarded the 2021 Health Equity Award from the California Department of Health Care Services for its BlueSky initiative.

By taking important steps to strengthen youth well-being and combat the rising prevalence of youth mental health conditions, Blue Shield of California is helping support and develop resilient communities across the state so that the next generation is equipped with a healthy foundation for a lifetime.

View the Modern Medicaid Alliance's [Medicaid Spotlight post here](#).

Medicaid Is Critical to Addressing the Mental Health Needs of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)

July is [National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month](#), and the Modern Medicaid Alliance is committed to raising awareness about the mental health needs of minority communities throughout the country.

This year, the observance carries added significance as communities continue to work through the COVID-19 crisis and the additional challenges that impact health and wellness, including isolation and increased stress.

Nearly [52 million adults](#) across the U.S. are affected by mental illness each year. These conditions can be particularly prevalent in minority populations and underserved communities due to geographic challenges with accessing care, cultural stigma, and economic barriers to receiving care.

According to [recent data](#) from Modern Medicaid Alliance partner Mental Health America, minority communities experience the following prevalence of mental health conditions:

- Native American/Alaskan Native: 830,000, or 23%
- African Americans: 6.8 million, or 17%
- Latinx/Hispanic Americans: 8.9 million, or 15%
- Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders: 2.2 million, or 13%

Improving mental health care across the country means that everyone – no matter their background, culture, ethnicity, or identity – can get the appropriate support and quality of care to live healthy, fulfilling lives.

As the [single largest payer](#) for mental health services in the country, serving [26%](#) of all adults living with a serious mental health disease, Medicaid plays an important role in expanding access to mental health services and making that care more equitable.

Medicaid programs provide [a range of mental health services](#), including social work services, counseling, peer support, substance use disorder treatment, and inpatient and outpatient psychiatric care. Services that enable people with mental health conditions to work, including job coaching and transportation, are also covered by Medicaid. Telehealth is also playing a critical role in offering mental health services to more people. Many Medicaid managed care organizations are [promoting access to telehealth](#), providing on-demand behavioral health programs via telemedicine, and helping Medicaid enrollees access Wi-Fi and digital devices to take advantage of telehealth services.

These mental health services offered by Medicaid are critical in reducing health disparities.

Research has found that Medicaid expansion was associated with [significant increases in mental health treatment](#) among all racial and ethnic groups, although disparities persist. Additionally, addiction treatment [programs that accept Medicaid payments play a significant role in eliminating disparities](#) in treatment completion among Latinx/Hispanic Americans.

Medicaid has also been associated with a [suppression of racial disparities in reported need for mental health services](#) for children and the families of children with special health care needs.

Improving the accessibility and quality of Medicaid mental health services will lead to better mental health outcomes for people of color and underserved and at-risk communities.

For more information on the mental health services Medicaid covers, visit [this link](#).

View the Modern Medicaid Alliance [blog post here](#).

Supporting the Mental Health of New and Expectant Mothers Through Medicaid

May marks [National Mental Health Month](#) – an important month of commemoration, considering that an estimated [1 in 5 adults](#) across the U.S. lives with mental illness. May is also a month of celebration of women, through Women’s Health Month, and of mothers, through Mother’s Day.

Mental health is a critical part of the overall well-being of new and expectant mothers. Sadly, it’s been an issue of even greater significance during the COVID-19 crisis. As the [single largest payer](#) for mental health services, Medicaid plays a unique role in the lives of women with mental health challenges – and it’s important we continue to strengthen this vital program now more than ever.

New and expectant mothers face [major life changes](#) and many experience physical and mental health hardship. Depression and a range of other mental health disorders impact women most often in the perinatal period – which spans from when a woman is pregnant through the first year after the baby’s birth.

Modern Medicaid Alliance partners have carried out initiatives from innovative care models to communications efforts to support maternal mental health. Here are some examples of the work of our partners.

Convening Thought Leaders

As the nation’s leading community-based nonprofit dedicated to addressing the needs of those living with mental illness, Alliance partner [Mental Health America](#) is acutely aware of the prevalence of mental health issues for new and expectant mothers, particularly [during the COVID-19 crisis](#).

Earlier this month, Mental Health America hosted a [webinar](#) on maternal and family mental health with panelists from Therapy for Black Kids, Postpartum Support International, and 2020Mom. Further, Mental Health America maintains numerous essential resources on maternal mental health, including a [screening](#) for postpartum depression and a [guide](#) to navigating the mental health challenges that may arise from pregnancy and childbirth.

Leveraging Expertise to Improve Health Outcomes

Last December, Alliance partner [Nurse-Family Partnership](#) joined forces with [Child First](#), a national, evidence-based intervention model which stabilizes families and improves the health and wellbeing of both parents and children. Child First supports caregivers so that they can develop and sustain nurturing, consistent, and responsive relationships with their children.

By combining their organizations’ expertise, Nurse-Family Partnership and Child First are employing an [evidence-based home visiting model](#) with a team- and relationship-based approach in 4 states – North Carolina, Florida, Connecticut, and Colorado – to help meet the emotional needs of the family. The model, which uses child-parent psychotherapy and weaves in other approaches to mental health, features a care coordinator who works with the caregiver to identify the unique needs and stressors of the family then links them with services to help meet those needs. The program is funded in part by Medicaid and includes many families who qualify for the program.

The program is showing specific and strong outcomes in decreasing depression or mental health problems in mothers receiving the intervention, reducing caregiver stress and depression and child behavioral problems, as well as positive outcomes on addressing child communications challenges.

Harnessing Innovation and Disseminating Best Practices

As a national resource, partner, and advocate for state public health leaders, the [Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs](#) (AMCHP) is committed to disseminating best practices, providing technical assistance and convening leaders to share experiences to reach the common goal of healthy children, families, and communities.

A core part of this effort is the [AMCHP Innovation Hub](#), an online platform that provides health care professionals with tools and resources to explore, build, and share successful and effective practices from the maternal and child health field. The Innovation Hub has numerous resources and best practices guides related to maternal mental health, including:

- [Mothers Rising Home Visiting Program](#)
- [The JJ Way Model of Maternity Care – Easy Access Clinic](#)
- [MotherWoman: Community-based Perinatal Support Model](#)

While more work is needed to dispel stigmas around mental health and provide new and expectant mothers with the mental health resources they need, Modern Medicaid Alliance partners are at the forefront of this vital issue.

[View the Modern Medicaid Alliance's blog post here.](#)

How Medicaid Strengthens Mental Health Services for Veterans



How Medicaid Strengthens Mental Health Services for Veterans

Veterans have a higher likelihood of mental and behavioral illness related to their military experience and are among those who benefit from Medicaid coverage of mental health treatment. In fact, more than 1 in 10 veterans have been diagnosed with substance use disorder (SUD),¹ and more than 3 out of every 10 veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan report having a mental health or cognitive condition.² Medicaid coverage provides support for veterans who suffer from these and other mental health conditions.

1. Nearly 2 million veterans rely on their Medicaid coverage for routine checkups and mental health services, especially if they live far from a Veteran's Administration (VA) facility.³
2. Veterans with Medicaid coverage have complex health needs. For example:⁴
 - 54% have a disability
 - 11% have a severe mental illness
 - 12% have a substance use disorder
 - 35% describe their health as fair or poor
3. Among veterans covered by Medicaid, nearly 40% have Medicaid as their only source of health care coverage. For the remaining 60%, Medicaid supplements other coverage, helping to improve both their health and financial security.⁵
4. Many state Medicaid programs cover services that aim to address mental illness and substance use like peer support services – where individuals use their own lived experience recovering from SUD to support others in recovery – and other programs that promote productivity for adults.⁶
5. Veterans make up 12% of people experiencing homelessness in the United States. Medicaid has been found to improve access to care and overall health for veterans experiencing homelessness, who often lack access to other sources of coverage and have high rates of chronic health conditions, disabilities, mental health issues, and alcohol or substance use disorder.⁷
6. State Medicaid programs often cover behavioral health benefits for enrollees experiencing mental illness or SUD – including many veterans – such as psychiatrist services, inpatient psychiatric care, and inpatient SUD treatment. Some states' Medicaid programs also cover supported employment services like personal care, transportation, and job coaching, that help people with mental illness obtain and maintain employment.⁸

1 <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/substance-use-military-life>

2 https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB9336.html

3 <https://familiesusa.org/resources/cutting-medicaid-would-hurt-veterans/>

4 <https://www.cbpp.org/veterans-with-medicaid-have-complex-health-needs>

5 <https://www.kff.org/infographic/medicaids-role-in-covering-veterans/>

6 <https://www.gao.gov/assets/710/708685.pdf>

7 <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/the-role-of-medicaid-and-impact-of-the-medicaid-expansion-for-veterans-experiencing-homelessness/>

8 <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/medicaids-role-in-financing-behavioral-health-services-for-low-income-individuals/>

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Download the infographic [here](#).

