

MEDICAID MATTERS IN IDAHO

REAL STORIES, REAL IMPACTS, REAL COMMUNITIES

WINTER 2012

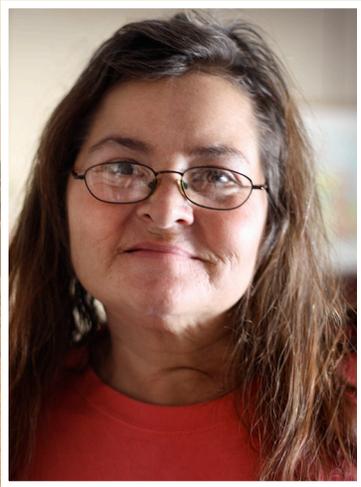


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INTRODUCTION

A strong Medicaid program is an asset to the state of Idaho, to the Idahoans who need the services it funds, and for the positive impact it has on our economy.

The lives and wellbeing of hundreds of thousands of Idahoans depend on Medicaid. The program is the state's largest single source of health insurance and covers essential services that allow seniors and people with disabilities to thrive and live independently. Those who count on Medicaid include the more than 210,000 people enrolled in the program, many of them children, people with disabilities, and seniors.¹ They also include the more than 18,000 people whose jobs can be attributed to the economic activity that Medicaid generates.² Despite Medicaid's importance to Idahoans, the state has begun to slash its investment in the

program. These cuts are already resulting in people going without the health care they need. They are also beginning to unravel the system of community-based services that have helped thousands of Idahoans with disabilities to live independently. Meanwhile, as we enter 2012, Idaho faces another possible round of harmful Medicaid cuts.

This publication shares the stories of people whose families' lives and livelihoods depend on Medicaid. They include parents, people with disabilities, seniors, health care providers, and community leaders who see the importance of Medicaid in their communities. These stories underscore the costs of cutting Medicaid and show how urgent it is for Idaho to change its course and restore its investment in this critical and valuable program.

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THE DIFFERENCE MEDICAID MAKES TO IDAHO

Providing Health Care that Helps People Thrive

Medicaid provides comprehensive health coverage to over 210,000 Idahoans, more than 150,000 of them children. Without this coverage, many would be uninsured, left with no way of paying for necessary health care such as well-child exams, cancer treatments, heart check-ups, and other health care upon which their lives depend.

The need for Medicaid has grown in recent years, with enrollment increasing by nine percent between state fiscal years 2009 and 2010. This increase is the largest seen in eight years, according to the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, and is due in large part to job loss among parents, rendering greater numbers of children Medicaid-eligible.³

Helping Seniors and People with Disabilities Live Independent Lives

Medicaid also provides health coverage to approximately 55,000 adults. Of these, more than half are seniors or people with disabilities.⁴ For them, Medicaid provides essential services that are not only life-sustaining but that also support their independence and ability to participate fully in their communities. Such home- and community-based services provide a cost-effective alternative to services in nursing homes or other institutions. They also allow people with disabilities to live in and contribute to their communities.

For example, psychosocial rehabilitation (PSR) helps people with mental illness manage their conditions. PSR providers assist clients in developing the skills to recognize emerging symptoms or changes in their symptoms, monitor their medication, and manage stressors and the results of delusional thinking. Thanks to these specialized services, people with mental illness are able to reduce hospitalization and live more productive lives.

Developmental therapy involves the teaching of new skills and behavior patterns to people with development disabilities, such as autism and cerebral palsy. The skills taught range from basic self care skills (such as bathing and dressing) to independence skills (such as money management and use of public transportation). The therapy must be provided by trained staff and tailored to the individual, depending on the specific skills being taught and the particular person's level of learning.

These and other services, such as physical, occupational, and speech therapy, provide essential supports to people with disabilities. Without Medicaid coverage of such services, the people who need them face greater risk of hospitalization, institutionalization, and/or regression from the skills they have learned.

Generating Jobs and Economic Activity

Medicaid does more than provide health coverage and services for seniors, low-income children and families, and people with disabilities. It is also an economic engine. Almost 70 percent of Idaho's Medicaid spending comes from the federal government.⁵ This means that for every dollar the state puts into the program the federal government puts in two and a half. Only three percent of the cost of the program goes to administration. The rest – 97 percent – goes to providers of care.⁶ This spending supports health care industry jobs in Idaho's counties and directly purchases goods and services.

These purchases trigger further cycles of earnings and purchases that ripple throughout the economy, affecting individuals and businesses not directly associated with health care. Through this process, Medicaid generates jobs, income, and economic activity. Medicaid's contributions are particularly important in rural areas, where the economy can often be dependent upon a single industry that has been particularly hard hit in the recession.

In state fiscal year 2010, Medicaid injected an estimated \$906.4 million in value added to Idaho's economy.⁷ That year, the program generated an es-

timated 18,241 jobs across the counties, including 5,470 in Ada County, 2,089 in Canyon County, and 1,728 in Bonneville County.⁸

THE COST OF REDUCING THE STATE'S INVESTMENT IN MEDICAID

With Idaho facing revenue shortfalls, Medicaid has been the target of budget cuts despite its importance both in terms of lives and dollars. Although every dollar cut from Medicaid results in Idaho losing three dollars from the federal government, the Legislature and state policymakers have rolled back the state's investment in Medicaid.

In fiscal year 2010, the Department of Health and Welfare enacted a series of cuts that included delaying payments to providers, giving employees a 5.2 percent pay cut, and laying off or freezing the positions of 33.5 employees.⁹ Those cuts also im-

The changes to dental care mean that Medicaid now will cover the pulling of teeth but not the care needed to prevent tooth problems.

pacted many local health providers, such as nursing homes, rehabilitation services, and assisted living facilities,¹⁰ leading to proposed layoffs of staff¹¹ and concerns about cash flow.¹²

The Legislature compounded these cuts in 2011 by passing legislation (H260), turning temporary austerity measures into ongoing, statutorily mandated reductions that cut \$34 million¹³ in state spending – but, when matched with federal funds, the residents of Idaho lost about \$70 million in services. Many of the services that were cut or eliminated prevented more serious – and expensive – conditions. The changes to dental care, for example, mean that

Medicaid now will cover the pulling of teeth but not the care needed to prevent tooth problems.

In addition, the legislation imposes copayments on podiatry, optometry, and chiropractic visits.¹⁴ These fees, designed to reduce utilization of services by raising the costs, have been associated with lower use of necessary services among low-income people.¹⁵

This reduction or elimination of services has begun to unravel the system of community-based supports that has helped thousands of seniors and people with disabilities live and participate in their communities. Among the cuts are the following:

- Preventing people with mental illness and a developmental disability from receiving both psychosocial rehabilitation and developmental therapy. Now, 600 dually diagnosed Idahoans have to choose between these two sets of services, regardless of their need for both.
- Moving people into group developmental therapy. By creating a “blended rate” for developmental therapy (instead of individual and group rates), many providers are reducing or eliminating individual services and putting people into services provided in groups. This group approach is inappropriate for some situations and ineffective for certain learning styles or abilities to grasp abstract concepts.
- Changing the system by which each adult client's budget for services is calculated. The new system is based on a model for setting budgets for chil-

Medicaid makes sense — economically, health wise, and from a good government management perspective.

dren that is just being initiated and has not been tested for effectiveness. It is not based on an individual's needs but on managing an appropriation across a group of people. It is likely to reduce the services many people receive, despite their need for those services.

The effects of these cuts are already being felt. One young man with dual diagnosis, unable to manage

his medication without PSR and unable to receive individual developmental therapy, was hospitalized for several days. As these reduced services continue, more people are finding themselves at the brink of hospitalization, considering suicide, or both.

Among provider agencies, it was reported in July that agencies assisting people with developmental disabilities were struggling to provide services due to reimbursement cuts. With the lower rates, agencies are frequently unable to provide individual developmental therapy that helps clients, such as people with autism, achieve and maintain more independent living. On top of these impacts, agencies have been forced to lay off staff,¹⁶ compounding joblessness in the state.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In Idaho, lives and livelihoods depend on Medicaid. Through its investment in the program, Idaho offers comprehensive health coverage to more than 210,000 Idahoans, provides services that people with disabilities could not access otherwise, and generates thousands of jobs. However, this investment is being rolled back at the cost of people's health, independence, and wellbeing.

To ensure a healthy future for the state as a whole, Idaho must reverse this course and reinvest in Medicaid. This year, Idaho lawmakers should do the following:

Restore and preserve Medicaid funding. Idaho can remedy recent years' cuts by restoring the funding that has been eliminated from the program and refraining from any further cuts. This restoration will benefit the entire state, which depends on Medicaid not only for health coverage but also for jobs and economic activity.

Renew Idaho's commitment to providing access to health care through Medicaid. Lawmakers should ensure that Idahoans covered by Medicaid can access the health services and supplies they need, including eyeglasses, dentures, and physical therapy. Idaho lawmakers should also reverse the imposition of copayments, which lead to people going without health care that they need, increasing costs in the long run. Prevention or early intervention saves money.

Rebuild Idaho's system of community-based care. Idaho's system of home- and community-based care provides immense value to seniors and people with disabilities and provides cost-effective alternatives to costly institutional care. Idahoans with disabilities should be able to access the psychosocial rehabilitation, developmental therapy, and other services they need in order to live and participate in their communities.

Medicaid Makes a Difference for Idahoans

Joe Raiden Moscow

I've lived in Moscow since I was two years old, I own my own business and have a house with my wife and two kids. My wife, my kids, and I all have developmental disabilities. My wife has diabetes, recently underwent knee surgery, and has depression. Since we don't have any private health insurance, Medicaid is the only way we are able to pay for any medical care – not only medications, but also developmental therapy and service coordination for my wife.

While I try to keep up with paperwork deadlines, appointments and understanding the language the Department of Health and Welfare uses, without the support to help us figure out all of the information, it is impossible to jump through the hoops required in order to keep my family members healthy and get the support they need.

For almost 10 months now, my wife has been without any services, including any help managing her diabetes, having her feet checked on a regular basis, understanding the importance of checking blood sugar levels. Her depression has been completely ignored. Her health has declined significantly and she is experiencing severe depression.



It is difficult to find a dentist in my town that takes Medicaid. As a result, we recently had to go to the ER for my 15-year-old son, who was experiencing extreme tooth pain and swelling, and ended up putting \$2,000 on a credit card to have four teeth pulled. Our community cannot afford to have Medicaid taken away.



Terri Sterling Culdesac

I've lived in the Culdesac area for about 22 years, and, as a community leader, it is patently clear that our community is struggling. Since the economic downturn, jobs are difficult to find, schools are closing down, and cuts have scaled back our food program. I volunteer when I can, including with the Idaho National Guard, but my family is struggling. Between me, my husband, and our four kids, finding money for the bills is difficult enough without worrying about medical expenses. Medicaid has made a huge difference for us there.

Cheryl Vann

Nampa

I provide care for my nephew, Robert, who is 38, has autism, and is non-verbal. After the cuts to Medicaid, Robert gets less one-on-one time at his developmental center. Without that personal attention, the atmosphere at the center isn't good for him, because it's not quiet enough and over stimulates him. That's because he's very sensitive to noise. One-on-one developmental therapy calms him.

Since the Medicaid changes, Robert's doctor has had to increase the dosage on his anti-anxiety medications twice. Now, Robert takes anti-anxiety meds up to three times a day. I give it to him as soon as he comes home from the developmental center. When Robert is anxious, he bites his hands and gives himself bloody knuckles.



Robert

It's also a real struggle to brush Robert's teeth, because his autism makes him very sensitive to touch and he can't say when it hurts his mouth. That means he needs dental cleanings twice a year – something that's been eliminated by the Medicaid changes.

The stress Robert is going through makes it more difficult to handle him at home. I'm worried about any more cuts. How does making him miserable save money when he is just needing more medication and ultimately becoming less healthy and happy?

Francisca*

Boise

I love Boise. I often walk around our neighborhood, and we can easily walk and bike to local businesses, my daughter's school, and the hospital. This is especially important, because my daughter is legally blind and deaf. A few times a year she has to take trips to the doctor or the hospital.

At first, we tried to use my husband's medical insurance to pay for everything. But the first time we took our daughter to the doctor it cost us thousands of dollars, and it took us several years to pay the bill. Then we found out that Medicaid would cover many of the treatments my daughter needs.

Without Medicaid, we wouldn't be able to afford important things for her, like speech therapy or a hearing aid. I can only speak for myself and my family, but Medicaid is critical to my daughter's health and our ability to pay the bills and meet even our basic needs. Medicaid provides a future for not only my daughter, but for thousands of other children like her.

* Name has been changed

Medicaid Makes a Difference for Idahoans

Dennis Bardales **Burley**

I love my family very much, and it was hard for all of us when my 16-year-old son started constantly getting sick. For years, he would get ear and throat infections, and the doctors would have no idea what was wrong. Finally, after taking blood tests, we discovered that his body could not produce enough white blood cells. He is very hard-working and does well in school, but he constantly beats himself up worrying that he isn't normal.

I work hard to provide for my family, driving a truck more than eight hours a day for a pesticide company, but it hasn't been easy for us. My wife was diagnosed with cancer and needed multiple surgeries, and she still needs regular appointments with the doctor. These expenses make it almost impossible for us to afford my son's medicine. Even though I have basic medical insurance, our deductible is very high.



Having Medicaid would mean a lot for my family and my son. Unfortunately, I make too much money for them to accept me into the program, but I don't make enough to cover all of our expenses, especially with my wife's cancer treatment and son's medication. Just because my family doesn't qualify, though, doesn't mean Medicaid should be taken away from other families.

Jennie Vavra **Greenfield**

I grew up here in Greenfield with my parents and four sisters and have lived here my whole life. I've seen this community grow and change over time and, even though it is small, I really like it. About a year ago I got laid off from my job after I was sick and had to miss too many days.

Medicaid is very important for me, especially in helping me with my high blood pressure. Until recently, I would get all of my medications paid for, but now it's a lot more difficult, between not having a job and needing to pay some of my medical expenses. I am incredibly thankful for my family's support, and, right now, one of my sisters helps me with my medical expenses.

I don't know what I would do without Medicaid – if I lost all of my Medicaid it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, for me to pay for my medications. Without Medicaid my community would suffer greatly, and many of us would be disempowered and left without a lot of options.

Jodi Slocum

Orofino

My husband and I were born and raised in Idaho, and, about five years ago, we decided to move back closer to home with our two daughters. While Orofino has been hit hard by the economy and recently lost one of its two mills, it is still a beautiful place with great people.

We have been in limbo since my husband hurt his back while working on a semi-truck. We have both tried to make money as best we can, and I start a job flagging for road construction soon, but it is difficult for us to pay for all of our medical needs. Our oldest daughter has an extreme case of ADHD, which has made school very difficult for her and has had a huge influence on her life. Luckily, she qualifies for the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), which has helped pay for her medication. Without it, we wouldn't be able to go to the doctor or pay for her medication, and she would not be able to function.

Taking Medicaid and CHIP away would destroy our future. A lot of people in my community need Medicaid, and, without it, a lot of local children wouldn't receive any medical help. Having a support system like Medicaid is an enormous relief for a lot of families, and is absolutely necessary for people like my daughter.

Karen McWilliams

Boise

About 19 years ago, I moved from Kansas City to Boise. When we first moved to our apartment, I would sit and talk with people who lived nearby and really enjoyed driving around the community. Since then, it has gotten harder for me to get around without my car and with my arthritis. I rely immensely on Medicaid to help me with my health needs, which, right now, includes congestive heart failure, gout, fibromyalgia, and arthritis in my knees and hands.

Medicaid has been hugely important for me. I need to travel back and forth between doctors, and, without Medicaid, I wouldn't be able to pay for transportation. Medicaid also helps me pay for my heart medication. If Medicaid were taken away, I wouldn't be able to pay my bills, afford a place to live, or buy the heart and blood medication that keeps me alive.



Medicaid Makes a Difference for Idahoans

Kathy McNary Caldwell

I am a Native Idahoan and have lived here my entire life. About eight years ago my husband, our three kids, and I moved to our current house in Caldwell.

I love to do crafts and make jewelry, but it has been difficult lately with all of my medications that make me tired constantly. I have severe migraines. The medication helps a lot, but the drawback is that it makes it hard for me to stay awake. My son also has autism and requires medication, also. And my husband has developmental disabilities and really terrible stomach problems he needs medicine for, too.

We face a lot of challenges in our family, but we have a lot of love, too, and we try to enjoy things as best we can. We'd be in huge trouble without Medicaid. I'd wind up back in the hospital and my husband wouldn't be able to function. He wouldn't be able to help our son.

Medicaid is important to a lot of people in our community. People's lives depend on it.



Mona Montgomery Peck

I live with my husband in the small town of Peck, managing an RV campground. Our town used to be a big logging town, but that died down and we now rely a lot on tourism through fishing, hunting, and camping. When we aren't taking care of the campground, I spend a lot of my time fighting for social and economic justice.



Both my husband and I rely on Medicaid to help us pay our medical bills. He has chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, which makes working difficult in hotter weather, and he also struggles with a neck injury. I am diabetic, and a few years ago fell and broke my neck. Especially after I lost my job – and our health insurance with it – in 2009, Medicaid has been extremely important for us.

A couple months after I stopped taking medication two years ago I went to a doctor who found out my blood sugar was way too high and sent me to the emergency room. The bill from that trip ended up being almost \$45,000. If I hadn't had Medicaid then I have no idea where I would be now, and if we weren't able to get medication now, I would go blind, have kidney failure, and possibly die.

Before people make big cuts to these programs, I think they should walk in the shoes of people who use programs like these.

Jennifer Leap

Coeur d'Alene

I have lived alone with my son in Coeur d'Alene for the past four years. Being a single mom is difficult, especially now that I am in school full-time, studying accounting. My son is now seeing a counselor for his autism.

There is no way we could have afforded the services my son receives without help from Medicaid, since my regular insurance refused to help us. The treatment he gets has allowed him to be a part of our community and make friends, and has relieved my stress level. We are much happier now than we were.

It is scary to think that Medicaid might be cut. It has enabled me to be a productive member of our community and allows my son to learn and grow. It is obvious that our community suffers more and more each time Medicaid is cut back. Taking away services will destroy our country, and removing Medicaid altogether would be catastrophic for me, my son, and our community.

Jennifer's son



Retta Green

Caldwell

I love fishing, camping, and traveling. For more than 20 years, I drove an 18-wheeler throughout the country, hitting 47 of the 48 continental states. Since being diagnosed with colon cancer in June, I am limited to short walks, light work in my garden, and taking care of my dogs. In August, I had surgery and have been taking medication, which costs hundreds of dollars a month.



Since starting my treatment, I have lost a lot of weight in addition to the medicine's expected side effects of diarrhea and nausea. I try and exercise as much as I can to keep my strength and my body in shape. Without Medicaid, I would not be able to afford the medications I am taking. I would die.

Our community has begged to have Medicaid back because people are really suffering. Both children and older people rely on help paying for their medical bills. Our country is one of the richest in the world, and we have worked hard our whole lives. It would be a farce to suggest we cannot pay for Medicaid anymore.

Medicaid Makes a Difference for Idahoans

John Kihara Pocatello

I suffer from severe chronic depression, receive psychosocial rehabilitation (PSR) services, and see a psychiatrist every three months. My PSR services recently dropped from five to three hours a week. I also have pre-diabetes, hypertension, back pain, and problems with my feet. The loss of those PSR hours has made life more difficult to manage in terms of getting things done, and taking care of myself.

My teeth hurt, but I don't have access to a dentist. My glasses don't work so well for me anymore, but, without optometry benefits, I can't get my prescription adjusted. I'm especially concerned about transportation. AMR has failed to pick me up, or I have to walk 20 minutes to get to the stop, which aggravates my back and feet and also makes it hard to get back and forth to my appointments.

Things just got really bad for me this past October, and I had to spend three weeks at the Portneuf Medical Center's psychiatric ward. They put me on lithium, and I'm not bipolar, so I'm having serious side effects. I've been told I have to wait until December 15 to see my doctor, and I hope I can get medication that will help me.



Robin Evans Grangeville

I've lived in various cities in Idaho for my whole life. Right now, I live with my husband, one of my daughters, and her three children. I work two jobs – one delivering papers and another at a high school kitchen serving lunches – and try to volunteer when I'm not working and spending time with my family. Our town is small and pretty much like any other, where everyone knows each other and if you get into trouble, the community will help out.

Medicaid has been vital to our family staying healthy. My husband has been having health problems, and has needed a stress test and heart exam, and might need surgery. Two of my grandkids need medication that is paid for by Medicaid, which has helped both of them in school. Without Medicaid, we couldn't take them to the doctor or get their medicine, and they would have a lot more trouble getting along at school.

Health insurance is incredibly important to our community, and rather than talking about cutting it, I think we should make it work more effectively. A lot of people have trouble getting transportation through Medicaid, which only travels to certain places and only allows people to use certain providers. If people cannot drive themselves because of panic attacks, they rely on Medicaid for basic medical care that they would be unable to access otherwise. Families and communities like mine rely on Medicaid for their basic health needs.

Maria Luisa*

Boise

My family and I qualified for Medicaid last year and it completely changed our situation. My children – including my cousin, for whom I'm the guardian – could finally go to the dentist.

I can't imagine what we would do without Medicaid; I was afraid we'd need to file for bankruptcy. My husband works full-time at a food processing plant but doesn't have insurance, so any major illness would have put us over the edge. As it is he's been postponing an injury checkup because we are afraid he would need surgery, which we can't afford right now.

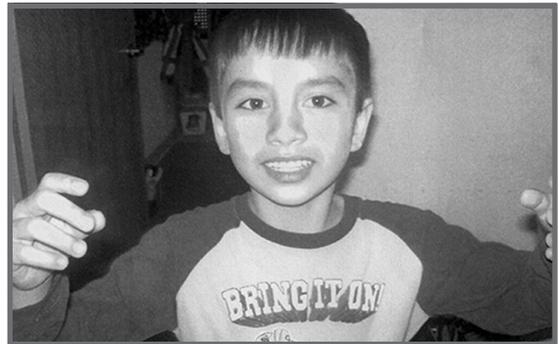
Our elected officials should protect the Medicaid program. It makes a huge difference in the health of my children and family. My kids are able to concentrate on school and I'm able to concentrate on work and raising them.

*Name has been changed.

Sheila Hensel

Post Falls

I recently moved with my husband and son to a strong and involved community with good programs for children. This was important to us because of our son's autism. Medicaid has helped our family immensely, and greatly improved his life with intensive behavioral therapy. After three years of therapy, he was able to overcome his developmental delays and be included in our community by learning how to better think for himself and engage with others.



Sheila's son

Medicaid has allowed us to access basic medical treatments, taking away the burden of paying huge amounts for care. If we lost coverage, we would not be able to pay for basic health and dental treatment, not to mention more expensive care for our son. I would be put under enormous stress to provide him with a good life and, in turn, would be more burnt out, which would also negatively impact my family.

I would tell people who say that we cannot afford Medicaid that we need to make sure our money is spent effectively and efficiently before cutting programs. We need to rethink priorities, provide employment for low-income families, and encourage investment programs.

Medicaid Makes a Difference for Idahoans

Amy Yardley

Coeur d'Alene

Since my son was born over nine years ago now, my life has revolved around him and what is best for him. He is on the autism spectrum, which limits his ability to create meaningful relationships with other people or, sometimes, even communicate effectively at all. As a result, this year we opted to home-school him. Our days are filled to the brim between teaching, guiding, and engaging with him, and, after all that, we sit down to meticulously plan the next day.

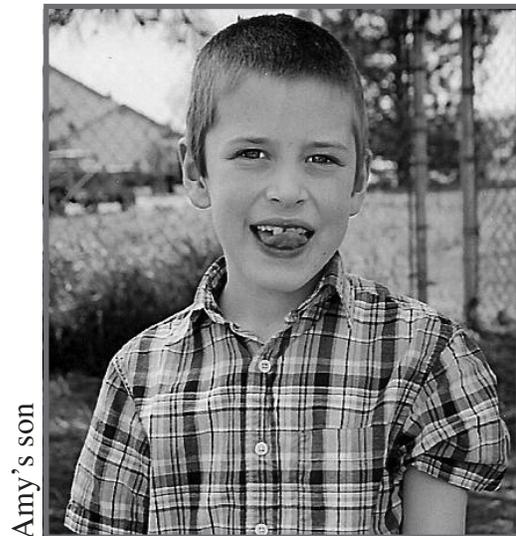
Medicaid is extremely important to us. Even though we are covered by a private health insurance plan, insurance companies are allowed to exempt treatments for autism. Without help, we would not be able to pay for behavioral, speech, or occupational therapies for our son, who needs a lot of help learning how to navigate this world. Now, after three years of intensive behavioral therapy, he no longer screams for most of the day – only a few times a month when he is really frustrated or angry.

Medicaid has been an investment in his future so that he will be less dependent on publicly funded services and more able to contribute to his community later on. This program has saved my family and allowed us to stay together. If we were to lose coverage, he would not receive the needed behavioral therapies and, as a result, his development would stagnate or regress. It is also important to understand that, if private insurance companies would cover the services my son needs, we wouldn't

use Medicaid. Instead, we rely on public money to maintain services for our son because we have no alternative.

Our communities cannot afford to lose Medicaid. Many families rely on the extra help, and people with disabilities will not magically disappear if funding is cut. The reason Medicaid has to bear this cost is because private insurance companies are allowed to discriminate against certain disabled segments of our society; against people like my son.

The reason Medicaid has to bear this cost is because private insurance companies are allowed to discriminate against certain disabled segments of our society; against people like my son.



Amy's son

Anna Whitehead

Boise

I am a licensed clinical social worker employed as the Director of Mental Health Services for Community Partnerships of Idaho's outpatient mental health department programs. I began working in this field over 10 years ago after repeatedly witnessing the stigma forced onto people struggling with mental illness who are constantly judged, humiliated, or dismissed. I love my work because I can help people move from a state of mental illness to mental well-being.

The people I serve have limited financial means to meet daily needs, and Medicaid provides a helping hand to people already facing difficult financial barriers. Many people rely on consistent treatment to help them with the symptoms of their disability.

A young woman I knew suffered from a dual diagnosis of Mild Intellectual Disabilities and Bipolar Disease, and she received two sets of treatment programs so that she could live independently when her mother eventually died. She needed basic help with things like getting out of bed, dressing in a socially acceptable manner, and having brief conversations despite feeling incredibly depressed.

After Medicaid funding cuts, she was forced to pick one program or the other, even though they are supposed to work in tandem. As a result, she regressed to the point that she ended up being hospitalized in a psychiatric facility.

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When we grant someone the benefits of a program like Medicaid, we are implicitly telling them that we want them to succeed and be independent. As a result, these people can better give back to their community. People who suggest that we can't afford Medicaid need to see how important this program is to real people, rather than relying on overgeneralizations they hear secondhand. Visiting face-to-face with individuals and families that rely on this program will make it obvious how Medicaid supports our communities.

Medicaid Makes a Difference for Idahoans

Leslie*

Twin Falls

For the past 16 years I have worked with individuals with disabilities and mental illness in the Twin Falls area. I see this field and my work as a way to help people combat the stigma and hardship that comes with their disability. For the population I work with, Medicaid is the basis for accessing important medical, mental, and in-home services – services that many families are not able to utilize without some degree of financial help.

Since Medicaid funding cuts have set in, the people we work with who have ongoing dental, optical, or hearing issues cannot receive help unless their situation is an emergency. The result of fewer services has been a reduced quality of life for many people, and a diminished opportunity for preventative care that would lead to huge long-run savings for our community and the state. Cutting funds to programs like Medicaid is backwards thinking; paying for prevention now is cheaper than cleaning up the aftermath of poor health later.

* Name has been changed

Jessica Gross

Spirit Lake

I am a stay-at-home mom and watch my kids, cousins, and foster kids, including our beautiful foster daughter, as needed. My son has anxiety and ADHD, which requires a lot of attention from my husband and me. If we didn't have Medicaid, we could never afford to send our children to see the doctor or go to the dentist. Without help, the health needs of both of our children wouldn't be met.

Without Medicaid, we would be crushed. Our son's treatments cost too much, and it would force us to choose between his medication and basic medical bills. This is not a choice for our community; we need Medicaid. Without services like Medicaid, our town's situation would gradually deteriorate as kids and their families are forced to continuously go without important health supports. The majority of our neighborhood receives Medicaid benefits, and the negative consequences would be severe if so many people were forced to go without health care.

Katherine Hemphill

Garden City

I have lived in Garden City my whole life, and I feel very comfortable here. I am dealing with major depressive disorder, and, while my family supports me a lot of the time, I rely on medical services to help me when my parents aren't around. These services have taught me to be independent, allowed me to work on my own goals, and helped me learn to be social, so I am not always alone.

Without the services that Medicaid provides me, I think eventually I would have to be by myself, which would be dangerous. My services really help me to be more independent and have allowed me to be a part of a community, something that I would truly miss if Medicaid was cut.

Recently, the treatments Medicaid would pay for were reduced, so that I had to choose between psycho-social rehabilitation therapy and receiving help at a therapy center. My aging parents had to step in to pay, although their budget only allows for 30 minutes of services every week.



Medicaid Makes a Difference for Idahoans

Mary Bergreen

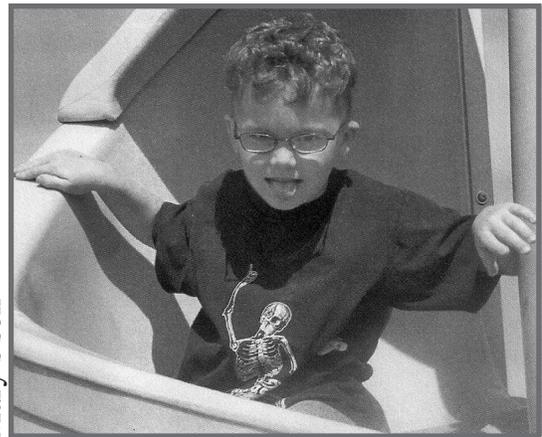
Spirit Lake

With eight children, my husband and I have a lot of mouths to feed and schedules to manage. Medicaid is extremely important for my family, and has offered us guidance, support, and intervention services that we would be unable to access with just our primary insurance. The preventative services we have been able to access through Medicaid has allowed my children to stay healthy and lead productive lives.

Unfortunately, my 8-year-old son has been forced to cope with Medicaid service reductions. Not only is he no longer learning social and academic skills necessary for basic functioning, but he is losing what skills he learned in the past. He has been removed from school and instead was enrolled in Idaho Online Academy, which keeps him out of his normal school environment.

When it functioned fully, Medicaid has had an undeniable and positive influence on our neighborhood by giving families and individuals the support and resources they need to contribute to our community. Because people can access the services they need, they don't have to resort to unhealthy means of survival.

Without Medicaid, we would not be able to access behavioral and mental health services, not to mention doctor visits and prescriptions. By cutting the lifeline that many citizens use to access health resources, people would be left without anywhere to turn.



Mary's son

Mohamed Odrhiri

Boise

About a year ago I joined the International Rescue Committee as a Medical Case Manager, working primarily with refugees.

Medicaid plays a big role in supporting incoming refugee populations. Many refugees spend anywhere from five to 20 years in a camp, where they hardly, if ever, see a doctor. By the time they make it to the United States, they suffer from malnutrition, poor hygiene, and any number of different diseases, and they often have no resources of their own at this point in their life to pay for medical treatment. On their own, few refugees would be able to access health care of the quality that Medicaid guarantees, if they could find any at all.

Medicaid cuts have further burdened refugee populations, including recent dental services cuts. Many refugees suffer from dental diseases after years of poor hygiene, which is then exacerbated by the high sugar content in American food. I knew one refugee who needed root canals in 80 percent of



his teeth, only to have Medicaid's dental services cut before he could be fitted for his. Another refugee cannot get a hearing aid since cuts in hearing services, severely limiting his ability to work and function to his potential.

People who cut Medicaid have a limited view of the future. Refugees like the ones I work with on a daily basis hope for a better life when they come to the United States. Why do we bring refugees in if we cannot help them work toward a better life?

I knew one refugee who needed root canals in 80 percent of his teeth, only to have Medicaid's denture services cut before he could be fitted for his.

Medicaid Makes a Difference for Idahoans

Nikki Wanner

Boise

I grew up here in Boise and recently returned six months ago with my son and daughter. Right now I am juggling being a fulltime student and taking care of my kids. My 8-year-old son has cognitive impairment and bi-polar disorder. He takes medication daily, undergoes physical therapy for a past leg surgery, and wears braces for both of his legs. Medicaid helps us pay for all of this.

Having help paying our bills has not only reduced my stress level, but also improved the lives of my kids. Medicaid helps families in need, like mine, who would otherwise struggle to provide their children with quality health care. If we weren't covered, I would have to drop out of school to homeschool and care for my kids. Funding Medicaid is a question of priorities, and there is nothing more important than the health of our people.



Nikki's son

Sandra Abend

Idaho Falls

I live in a Certified Family Home with a family and one other person with a disability. I have a developmental disability. I am not quite sure what it is. I have a mental health diagnosis of bipolar disorder. I have seizures.

My services have changed. I don't receive PSR anymore, and I have lost my dental and my eye insurance. I chose to receive developmental therapy instead of PSR services, when I had to pick one. I still receive one-on-one developmental therapy at the center and I get four hours of one-on-one developmental therapy each week. I also get developmental therapy in a group in the community working on safety, strangers, watching where I walk, crossing the street safely, and learning to compare prices while grocery shopping.

I used to get one-on-one developmental therapy in the community. I wish I could have more one-on-one in the community, because they can help me better, and it is better help than having to work in a group. There are three people in my group, including me. I am thinking about wanting to do My Voice My Choice (the self-directed waiver option).

My teeth are bothering me. I have a broken tooth right now on the bottom of my mouth. I have problems with my feet. They hurt a lot. It affects my balance. I have pain all over in my feet. My guardian is trying to get me orthotics, but I am not able to see a podiatrist.

Lisa*

Twin Falls

I have worked with programs related to Medicaid since 1980, and currently work as a program director for Inclusions South, where we aim to help people with severe disabilities.

People with developmental disabilities receive services through Medicaid that they would be unable to get otherwise. Without help, it is likely that many of these people would be homeless relatively quickly, because they rely on therapy to improve their ability to be a functioning member of their community. I know of several people recently who, as a result of cut services, were no longer able to live on their own and had to move in with family members.

Medicaid is important for us because it helps keep our clients from becoming homeless. Our community's health depends on finding ways to cut other than Medicaid cutbacks.

* Name has been changed

Nikki Tangen

Boise

I am the legal guardian of a 22-year-old woman, Krystal, who's struggled all her life with an intellectual disability and bipolar disorder. She also has a diagnosis of fetal alcohol syndrome.

For two years, she was doing very well. She was living in her own apartment, holding down a job, enjoying time with friends, and generally having an excellent quality of life. Then her psychosocial

rehabilitation hours (PSR), which made independent living possible, were cut. Her PSR worker had been helping her with decision-making and safety, but, when the PSR services stopped, Krystal began to let people into her home, gave her keys out, and the police had to get involved.

Finally, I had to step in and had Krystal living with me until I could find a group home for her. She's gained 40 pounds since moving there, because of the unhealthy food and the sedentary lifestyle. She's so unhappy, has trouble managing her emotions, and doesn't have her job anymore.



On top of all that, her mouth hurts from tooth decay and gum disease, which individuals with fetal alcohol syndrome are predisposed to. She can't get that taken care of, though, because dental care was cut, along with PSR hours. If Krystal's PSR hours were put back into place and if preventive dental care were covered again, Krystal would enjoy a safer and happier life.

I know of several people recently who, as a result of cut services, were no longer able to live on their own and had to move in with family members.

Medicaid Makes a Difference for Idahoans

Tracy Hofius

Post Falls

I live with my daughter, son, and husband in a community that has a real hometown feel. Most people are accepting of differences and will help others, which has been great for us. My son, who is 10 now, has autism. He is currently on an individualized education program, is now undergoing developmental therapy, and has received intensive behavioral interventions in the past.

Medicaid has provided all of this for him and, in turn, our family, supplementing our private insurance, which would not cover autism therapies. We are able to function as a typical family because of the treatment my son receives, and he has been able to integrate into a school. As a result, I am able to work and utilize the degree I worked hard to earn.

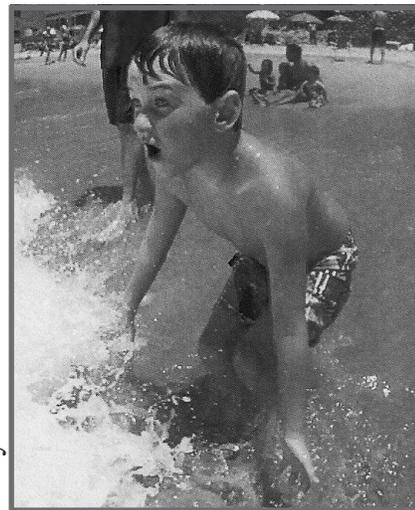
Unfortunately, his time allotment for behavioral interventions has been cut in half, and the amount he is allotted for all services was slashed to a quarter of what it was. We have had to adjust to his new schedule, with my husband only working part time to help out more. Even worse, we've seen a noticeable regression in my son's progress as a result of the decreased service hours.

Completely taking Medicaid away from our family would be a huge step backward. There are no alternatives for our son, and we really cannot afford to not have this coverage. Our country has a tendency to be reactive, rather than proactive.

Taking away Medicaid would destroy the positive impact the program has, not only on the lives it touches directly, but on the communities that they live in. The economic impact will mean fewer jobs, more unemployment, suffering families, and a larger population of vulnerable people – the elderly, the disabled, children, and at-risk youth.

Even worse, we've seen a noticeable regression in my son's progress as a result of the decreased service hours.

Tracy's son



Valerie Morse

Boise

Since 2004 I have lived in a quiet community on the outside of Boise. During the day I usually watch my kids and grandkids, take them to appointments, and generally keep the house in order. My granddaughter has a developmental disability and a cognitive impairment. Additionally, I struggle with neuropathy, anxiety, diabetes, agoraphobia, and bipolar disorder.

Recent cuts have made transportation services almost impossible to use. I'm not able to ride with my 10-year-old granddaughter to appointments anymore, because they expect her to ride by herself. Recently she underwent surgery, and, when I tried to schedule a trip home for her, they said that, because a bus stopped near my house, I should take that instead.

Even with all of these troubles, we are at least surviving thanks to Medicaid, which has made life at home easier. We're able to be a stable family because Medicaid helps us pay for medications for both me and my granddaughter. With this help I am able to be a mother and grandmother to my family.

The services and funding that Medicaid provides really help people with health problems and no money. We would be in a world of trouble without this help: I would lose control of my life without help managing my symptoms, and my granddaughter would be unable to stay calm. If people lived in my life for just one day, and saw how necessary it was for my family to have access to medication, they would see how important Medicaid is to our communities. We cannot afford to cut these programs.



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Medicaid Makes a Difference for Idahoans

Shiloh Blackburn

Pocatello

As much as anyone else, I have experienced how important Medicaid is to local communities. My Cerebral Palsy and seizure disorder have made it very difficult for me, especially since I live alone now and have no other insurance option. Most recently, I lost my dental and vision coverage for all but the most drastic of emergencies. This means I will have to go without things that other people take for granted, and it costs a lot to save up for even basic glasses and eye exams.

Cutbacks in funding have also made it more difficult for me to cope on a day-to-day basis. After they threatened to reduce the total time for the personal care I would receive, I fought for three extra hours for emergency needs, in case I get sick or have a seizure at night. Recently, I was sick and had two seizures during the day. Luckily, I was able to get someone to stay with me overnight.



Medicaid is so important in helping deliver the services I need to live independently in my home and contribute to my community. Without my personal care services, I would need to live with my parents or in a nursing home. Without medication to control my seizures, I would be seizing every other day instead of once a month.

Because Medicaid allowed me to control my seizures, I was able to finish my college education. I now have a much, much higher quality of life. It's a bunch of baloney that we can't afford to pay for Medicaid. We need to raise revenue with taxes or other funding sources. We have to keep our minds open to exploring these options.

Cutbacks in funding have also made it more difficult for me to cope on a day-to-day basis. After they threatened to reduce the total time for the personal care I would receive, I fought for three extra hours for emergency needs, in case I get sick or have a seizure at night. Recently, I was sick and had two seizures during the day. Luckily, I was able to get someone to stay with me overnight.

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Idaho Community Action Network (ICAN) serves as a powerful, consolidated voice for Idaho's poor, with chapters and membership clusters in 12 Idaho communities, including the state's three largest cities and numerous rural towns. Through ICAN, low-income Idaho families have a voice in the decisions that impact their lives. In addition to its direct action work, ICAN runs a statewide, volunteer-driven food program that helps low-income families supplement their monthly budgets. ICAN's community organizing model integrates the provision of food with training, leadership development and action on issues.

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The Consortium for Idahoans with Disabilities or CID is a coalition of Idaho agencies and organizations concerned with issues affecting people with disabilities. The mission of the Consortium for Idahoans with Disabilities is to protect, promote and advance the rights and interests of people with disabilities of all ages in Idaho.

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Alliance for a Just Society convenes community and racial justice organizations nationwide on critical public policy issues, providing research and policy analysis and fostering public conversation.

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