

## Medicaid Expansion Is Beneficial for Children

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) expands the Medicaid program to provide health care for millions of uninsured individuals, mainly low-income adults. In June, the Supreme Court ruled that states can choose whether to expand their Medicaid programs. Low-income children, even if they are already eligible for Medicaid, have much to gain if Missouri expands its Medicaid program (MO HealthNet) to cover their parents. Over 100,000 uninsured children are eligible for Medicaid. Many of these eligible children will enroll in Medicaid and stay enrolled if their parents are covered. Getting kids insured makes them healthier. For some, it can change their lives.

- **Expanding Medicaid to cover parents means that more eligible children will enroll.** Children who are eligible for health insurance are *three times more likely* to enroll if their parents also have insurance. Previous expansions of Medicaid coverage for parents have led to a significant increase in enrollment of eligible children and a drop in the number of uninsured children. The State estimates that 32,000 additional children are expected to enroll in 2014 as their parents become eligible for Medicaid.

*“With no outreach, no advertising, no partnerships to spread the word, enrollment soared,... Helping adults greatly contributed to the enrollment of children.”*

Gary Stangler, Director of Missouri Department of Social Services under Governors Ashcroft and Carnahan, commenting on, the increased enrollment of eligible Missouri children when Missouri expanded coverage for low income parents in the 1990s.

- **Expanding Medicaid to cover parents means that children are more likely to *stay enrolled*.** Studies have found that covering parents makes it less likely that children have breaks in their own Medicaid coverage.
- **Expanding Medicaid to cover parents makes it more likely that children will receive needed preventive care and other health care services.** Studies have found that insured children whose parents are also insured are more likely to receive check-ups and other care, compared to insured children whose parents are uninsured.
- **Parents’ health can affect children’s health and well-being.** The Institute of Medicine has reported that a parent’s poor physical or mental health can contribute to a stressful family environment that may impair the health and well-being of a child. Moreover, uninsured parents who can’t get care may be unable to work or may end up with big medical bills if they do get care. In either case, the financial consequences have a big impact on children even if the children have coverage.

### Sources:

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