

Multi-Year Continuous Medicaid Eligibility for Young Children



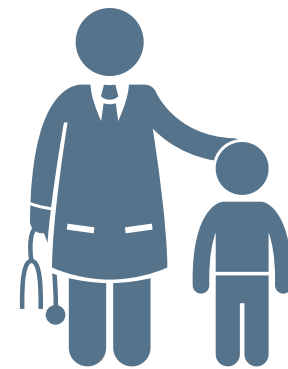
Annual Medicaid eligibility reviews lead to children losing coverage for months at a time.

Georgia can ensure continuity of care by seeking a waiver that provides children uninterrupted Medicaid coverage from birth through age three.

During the first years of life, a child goes to the doctor every few months to receive vaccinations, preventative care, and critical treatment. Losing healthcare coverage during this period can derail a child's healthy development. For a child with significant health needs, this disruption can be tremendous and life-altering. Early intervention and regular therapies to address potential delays may alter a child's trajectory and mitigate the need for more complex, costly services in the future.¹

Nationally, Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) cover 45 percent of children under the age of six, compared to 36 percent of children between the ages of six and 18. **In Georgia, this is especially true in rural areas, where 53% of children rely on Medicaid compared to 40% of children in metro areas.**²

When nearly 50% of Georgia's children are at risk of losing their healthcare coverage due to administrative errors, we have an obligation to seek continuous coverage for young children.³



The Challenge:

Medicaid eligibility reviews, which are required every year, can lead to children losing coverage for months at a time. This often happens due to administrative errors such as a caregiver missing a phone call or renewal notice, or the state failing to review eligibility documentation.

63,000+

More than 63,000 children lost Medicaid in June of 2023 as a result of difficulties with the eligibility redetermination process.⁴

During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency, the federal government waived the annual eligibility review. Since the Emergency ended last year, all states have been required to check eligibility for every individual enrolled in Medicaid - this process is also known as the Medicaid Unwinding.⁵ This arduous process has been challenging for many Georgians, leading to coverage loss for tens of thousands of children who are still eligible for Medicaid.

Georgia's Unwinding has highlighted inefficiencies in the Medicaid eligibility review process, however, these inefficiencies existed before unwinding and remain an issue. **Georgia's leaders have an opportunity to prevent young children from losing Medicaid coverage by improving the Medicaid eligibility review process, making it easier for both families and the state.**

BY THE NUMBERS

11
percent

of children lost and regained Medicaid coverage within a one-year period, according to a recent national study.⁶

15

well-child visits are recommended before a child's sixth birthday, according to The American Academy of Pediatrics' Periodicity Schedule.⁷

92
percent

of Georgia parents surveyed indicated they supported continuous Medicaid eligibility from birth to age five.⁸

10

states have adopted or begun the process to adopt multi-year continuous Medicaid eligibility for young children, including Ohio and North Carolina.⁹



The Solution:

The Department of Community Health (DCH) should seek to waive the Medicaid annual eligibility review requirement for children through three years old, saving families and the state from burdensome requirements that lead to months without healthcare coverage during this critical time in a child's life. Such waivers have been approved by the federal Medicaid agency and implemented in other states. In fact, many states have waived the annual eligibility review through a child's *sixth* birthday, an action Georgia might consider in the future.

References

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