NEWS RELEASE
CONTACT: Pati Urias
purias@azchildren.org
(602) 266-0707 x209 (office)
(480) 322-2270 (cell, text)
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New Medicaid Requirements Threaten to Take Away Health Coverage and Jobs with More Red Tape

(Phoenix, AZ) - Arizona’s Medicaid Agency (AHCCCS) is being given the go-ahead from the federal government to proceed with a pilot program to require “able-bodied” adults to work in order to continue receiving benefits. AHCCCS was granted approval from the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) requiring adult recipients to report on their work hours and ability to work as a condition of keeping their health coverage benefits.

A similar requirement has been implemented in Arkansas with more than 18,000 people losing coverage so far, many of whom did work, but have lost their jobs because they can no longer access treatments to keep pre-existing and chronic conditions under control.

“We have no reason to believe that new reporting requirements will improve people’s health and we’re worried that they will actually take us backwards,” said Debbie McCune Davis, executive director of The Partnership for Immunizations (TAPI).

Research shows that Medicaid health coverage enables many people to work because they can get the regular care they need to manage pre-existing and chronic health conditions.

“A work requirement would be a disaster,” said Daena Mireau, a Phoenix area AHCCCS recipient. “I’m lucky to find work as a part time contractor. As a single adult without children, I am worried about pre-existing conditions.”

No estimates have been released by AHCCCS, Ducey, or the legislature on what it will cost to implement the new regulations. Kentucky has a similar demonstration project in the works, which is reported to cost $374 million over the next two years to implement.

“I ask our lawmakers to tell us how they will ensure the new requirements don’t just create more red tape for Arizonans who are already working and take away health coverage from people who need it,” said Dana Wolfe Naimark, President and CEO of Children’s Action Alliance. “People who are already working, or can’t work for very specific reasons, could lose their health care due to paperwork errors, missing a filing deadline, or not getting enough work hours on their job.”

Studies find work requirements for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and SNAP (food stamps) result in fewer people getting benefits, but there is little help for people looking for work or trying to earn more money for their families. Executive director of the Arizona Public Health Association, Will Humble, said “Arizona is about to conduct a grand experiment on people insured through Medicaid. Now that it's a done
deal, it's super important for us to know exactly how the success or failure of the experiment will be measured and reported so we can make policy adjustments and other states can learn from our mistakes."