



July 17, 2023

Senator Van Orden, Co-Chair  
Medicaid Managed Care Task Force  
PO Box 83720  
Boise, ID 83720-0081

Representative VanderWoude, Co-Chair  
Medicaid Managed Care Task Force  
PO Box 83720  
Boise, ID 83720-0038

RE: Medicaid Managed Care Task Force

Dear Co-Chairs and Task Force Members:

As the Medicaid Managed Care Task Force moves forward with review and recommendations on how to deliver services efficiently and effectively while attempting to contain program costs, we ask that you keep patient care and outcomes top of mind. Better health for individuals within the Medicaid program is the most effective way to ensure costs are kept in check. Value based payment models that center the individual with coordinated care help improve patient health outcomes for individuals, as well as providing cost savings, helping keep Medicaid costs under control long term.

Individuals with chronic conditions, such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes, are better managed through consistent and stable preventive health services and lifestyle assistance programs. When health costs are prohibitive, service providers are not available, services are cut or capped, patients ration medication, or otherwise go without proper care, many conditions will worsen, leading to increased emergency room visits, longer hospitalization, and ultimately higher costs.

Preventive health services and healthy lifestyle assistance programs for those receiving Medicaid services would improve the ability for individuals to stay well. New research shows that support for access to healthy foods, through produce prescriptions or food is medicine programs provide nutritional support complementing standard medical care to help prevent more costly medical services in the future. These programs leverage targeted interventions to increase access to balanced and medically tailored meals that may otherwise be cost prohibitive for individuals qualifying for Medicaid. Savings in healthcare spending as well as productivity costs and improved quality of life for patients with chronic conditions support implementation of such programs.

Many families receiving Medicaid experience significantly higher rates of food insecurity than the general population, often forcing them to choose less healthy food options due to cost, skipping meals, or choosing between food and other costs, such as out of pocket expenses for health care or household bills.

- 32 percent of Medicaid beneficiaries often purchase less-healthy food options than they otherwise would because of lack of money, compared to 13 percent of non-recipients;
- 28 percent of Medicaid beneficiaries purchase less food overall due to a lack of financial means, compared to 10 percent of non-recipients;
- 27 percent of Medicaid beneficiaries worry that their food will run out before they have the means to buy more, compared to 7 percent of non-recipients; and

- 43 percent of Medicaid beneficiaries skip at least one meal per day due to a lack of food, compared with 28 percent of non-recipients.<sup>i</sup>

We know there are many options that will be considered to lower Medicaid costs, however, achieving better outcomes for the Medicaid population through access to nutritious foods and support to help maintain healthy lifestyle habits for the patients and their families will result in better outcomes alongside real cost reductions.

As noted in the Sellers Dorsey report on cost containment, stakeholders must be engaged in the process to adequately determine steps forward. We want to ensure that all voices are represented, particularly those with chronic conditions who will be at risk or adversely affected by certain cost containment strategies. We must ensure that any recommended changes to Medicaid are taken with all outcomes in mind, both in lowering costs and improved patient outcomes. We appreciate the task force's dedication to the health of all Idahoans and the thoughtful consideration of all recommendations and stakeholder perspectives. We would welcome the opportunity to participate in task force discussions or provide more information as you move forward in your decision-making process.

Sincerely,

Erin Bennett  
Government Relations Director  
American Heart Association, Idaho

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<sup>i</sup> 2018 Food and Health Survey. Food Insight. <https://www.foodinsight.org/2018-food-and-health-survey>. Published May 16, 2018. Accessed January 1, 2019.