



Medicaid's Citizenship Documentation Requirement: Impacts in Utah, Recommendations

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SUMMARY

A new Federal law requiring documentation of citizenship on all Medicaid applications has exacerbated the barriers to health care coverage for many otherwise eligible Utahns. Utah is not alone. Since the law went into effect on July 1, 2006, state Medicaid caseloads have dropped precipitously. Congress should remove the unnecessary mandate to document citizenship as part of its re-authorization of the CHIP program in 2007. Senators Rockefeller and Snowe have introduced legislation that would do just that while building on CHIP's remarkable success. As related initiatives are introduced, sponsors should include provisions removing the onerous documentation requirement.

BACKGROUND & KEY FACTS

Despite a July 2005 HHS report which found that non-citizens were *not* fraudulently applying or qualifying for Medicaid, Congress approved the new documentation requirement in the 2006 Deficit Reduction Act. Ironically, the barriers imposed by the new policy *are* saving states money, but only by denying or delaying benefits to eligible individuals.

A February 2007 report found that the new requirement has driven down enrollment in several states. According to a recent National Academy for State Health Policy report, the new Medicaid documentation requirement threatens to reverse progress on enrolling children; and this is true for all three types of CHIP programs, including separate programs (like Utah's). CHIP Directors are requesting to rescind the new requirement.

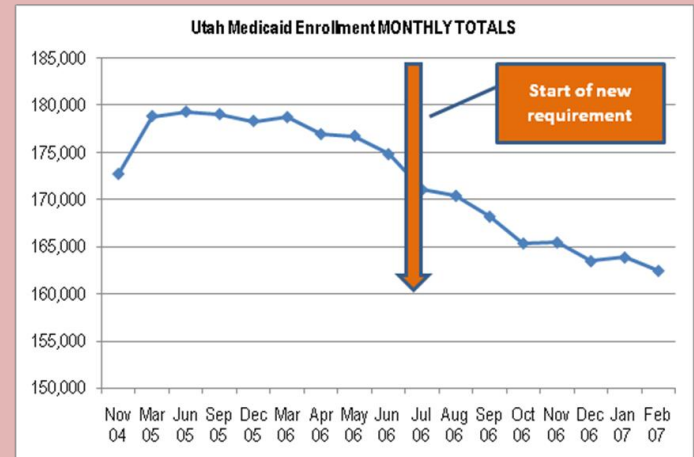
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Office of the Inspector General, "Self-Declaration of U.S. Citizenship Requirements for Medicaid," July 2005.
www.cms.hhs.gov/MedicaidEligibility/downloads/

DATA & IMPLICATIONS for UTAH



Enrollment in Utah Medicaid has been declining steadily since March of 2006 for reasons that have yet to be fully understood. However, true to expectations, enrollment dropped even more sharply after July 1, 2006.

Implementation of the new law must be monitored very closely in Utah because...

- Utah's Medicaid administration is very lean and not equipped to support applicants through the new barriers.
- The Utah Legislature considered imposing a similar requirement in its 2007 General Session. Luckily, the bill failed. However, sponsors have promised to reintroduce the measure next year. Utah's tragic experience with the citizenship documentation requirement should be used to educate policymakers on the harmful purpose of such requirements.

Next Steps for Utah

1. Continue monitoring impacts of the new requirement.
2. Support the Utah Department of Health's efforts to minimize the impact of the new policy while working to document its failings.
3. Information gathered in this process should be directed to Utah's congressional delegation.