



Utah Providers

SPEAK UP

Senate District: 27 (D. Hinkins)
House District: 69 (C. Watkins)

“Funding for critical Medicaid services like physical and occupational therapy needs to be restored,” says Utah Provider

Providing Medicaid Adults with Physical Therapy Is Critical and Cost-Effective

Richard Todd works as a physical therapist in Blanding. Among his Medicaid patients is a burn patient who successfully avoided infection and possible amputation because of physical therapy. Another patient, a 49 year old woman with impingement syndrome, which painfully limited motion in her right shoulder, used physical therapy to achieve pain-free functioning; without treatment, she most likely would have torn her rotator cuff.



“Without physical and occupational therapy, my Medicaid patients would have utilized more medical services, costing the state more dollars, and causing my patients to spend more time being injured and in pain. We need to ensure our Medicaid patients utilize therapy when they should to save the state money in the long run,” says Richard Todd.

When the Legislature cut physical therapy in September, Richard was just starting to treat another Medicaid beneficiary—a single mom working as certified nurse’s assistant who had a severe shoulder injury. Richard fears that not receiving the needed rehabilitative care that would help her optimize her shoulder’s function and prevent further injury will jeopardize her ability to work and provide for her family.

A Policy Solution: Restore Optional Services

During the 2008 Special Session, the Legislature cut five ‘optional’ services (eye glasses, outpatient physical and occupational therapy, and speech/ hearing therapy) for adults on Medicaid. While the immediate savings to the state general fund was modest (\$500,000), the cost for the patients who lost these services is very high. Example after example shows how health and productivity are increased when patients have access to critical care—improving the quality of life of beneficiaries and, in the long run, saving the state money by improving the long-term health of recipients.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (the economic recovery package) provides our state with sufficient resources to restore these critical services. For every dollar the state invests in Medicaid, including optional services, the Federal Government will now match \$4! As the Legislature finalizes budget priorities, it should:

- Restore the services and provider rates using the enhanced Federal match. These restorations are worthwhile even on a temporary basis because of lasting benefits to beneficiaries’ health.
- Avoid offsetting the stimulus with reductions elsewhere in the Medicaid program.
- Consider the full economic impact of Medicaid. Investing in Medicaid will help to jump-start Utah’s economy, as this money would be spent immediately and support thousands of Utah jobs. Medicaid provides the best return for our investment of state dollars.