

Expanding Medicaid Will Save Hundreds of Utahns' Lives *Medicaid expansion could save as many lives as seat belts, groundbreaking new research shows*

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SALT LAKE – The Affordable Care Act’s (ACA) expansion of Medicaid has prevented over 19,000 premature deaths, according to landmark new research. Conversely, 15,600 older adults died prematurely because of state decisions not to expand Medicaid. When Utah finally implements full Medicaid expansion in 2020, more than 200 Utah lives will be saved over four years. This new report comes on the one year anniversary of Utah's vote to fully expand Medicaid via Proposition 3, which was overturned by the state as the first priority of the 2019 legislative session.

“Medicaid expansion not only lets people obtain preventive services, medications, and other health care and avoid crushing medical debt, it can literally be a matter of life and death,” said Stacy Stanford, health policy analyst at Utah Health Policy Project. “Although Utah has enrolled more than 37,000 people in its partial expansion program, the state has yet to fully take advantage of the lifesaving benefits of full Medicaid expansion.”

Expansion’s lifesaving potential ranks with other major public health interventions: if all states had expanded Medicaid, the lives saved just among older adults in 2017 would roughly equal the lives saved by seat belts among the full population.

These new findings add to the large and growing body of research on the benefits of expansion. For example, expansion has led to large boosts in the share of low-income adults getting regular check-ups and other preventive care and filling prescriptions for heart disease, diabetes, mental health conditions, and other chronic health needs, as well as large decreases in the share going without a personal physician and skipping medications due to cost.

Expanding coverage also has increased financial security by lowering medical debt and reducing the risk of medical bankruptcy. And another new study finds that evictions have fallen about 20 percent in expansion compared to non-expansion states, indicating that gaining coverage is helping people avoid one of the most harmful consequences of financial stress. Full Medicaid expansion is key to addressing a variety of Utah's most pressing issues, including homelessness, hunger, and public health.

“ Study after study has shown that Medicaid expansion helps more people access care, improves health outcomes, and leads to more financial security. This is good for Utahns and Utah's budget. Elected officials should reject proposals for work reporting requirements and other new eligibility restrictions that would reduce coverage and cause people to lose access to care,” said Stacy Stanford.

To learn more, please visit : <https://www.cbpp.org/research/health/medicaid-expansion-has-saved-at-least-19000-lives-new-research-finds>

The study of expansion's impact on premature deaths, by Sarah Miller, Sean Altekruise, Norman Johnson, and Laura Wherry, can be found at <https://www.nber.org/papers/w26081>

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