

Trump's Plan for Medicaid Would Decimate Services for People With Disabilities

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As Congressional Republicans careen face-first towards the repeal of the Affordable Care Act, another threat is taking shape that promises to devastate the services that seniors and people with disabilities need. In addition to rolling back the health care law, and the Medicaid expansion that came with it, the Trump administration has announced its intention to turn what is left of Medicaid into a block grant.

Most Americans see Medicaid as only a health insurance program, but it is also the main source of funding for a wide variety of disability and aging services that keep people out of institutions. From the 93-year-old grandmother who needs an attendant to help her get out of bed, to the 24-year-old with Down Syndrome receiving a job coach, to the 6-year-old with a disability whose parents need support paying for skilled nursing care in their home—the Medicaid program is critical to ensuring the independence and freedom of disabled people of all kinds.

“Block-granting” the program will transform it from a guaranteed benefit for low-income Americans and people with disabilities to an annual lump sum payment to states that is not tied to the need for services. If an increasing number of people need these healthcare services, a block grant will not adjust to meet rising demand.

In addition, under the current Medicaid program, the federal government matches each dollar spent by states, enabling policymakers to make new investments toward eliminating waiting lists and broadening available services. However, without the guarantee of matching funds, states will not be able to sustain existing services—much less expand them to meet the tremendous unmet need in the disability community.

In fact, previous block grant proposals resulted in a loss of approximately [1 trillion dollars](#) of federal investment in Medicaid over the next decade.

Additionally, the Trump approach would diminish the federal government's historic role in using Medicaid funds to deinstitutionalize seniors and people with disabilities. For nearly 20 years—since the Supreme Court ruled in *Olmstead v. L.C.* that people with disabilities have a right to access supports in the community—federal policymakers have used Medicaid dollars to reward states that moved people out of institutional facilities and instead offer in-home services and supports.

These efforts depend on the federal government using innovative programs like Money Follows the Person. This program helped more than 63,300 people with disabilities leave institutional settings by providing an enhanced federal match rate to states to cover the full cost of supporting a person in the first year after they leave an institution.

In the absence of a federal role in Medicaid to promote community living, people with disabilities will find themselves at greater risk of institutionalization—despite the fact that they overwhelmingly express a preference for living in their own homes and communities.

As we fight back against Donald Trump's assault on so many different communities, people with disabilities supported by the Medicaid program deserve our full advocacy and activism too.

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