



children's
defense fund
texas

For Immediate Release

July 17, 2023

Contact: Cindy Ji, cji@childrensdefense.org, (973) 229-8429

New Data Raises Alarms, Indicates Thousands of Eligible Texans Were Removed from Medicaid

CDF-Texas Calls on State Leaders to Pause Scheduled Removals

Austin — Texas removed 500,784 people from Medicaid in June, but the state only actually found that 19% of these Texans were ineligible, according to new data released on July 14th, 2023 by the Texas Health and Human Service Commission (HHSC).

For the past three years, under COVID-19 emergency rules, anyone enrolled in Medicaid could keep their coverage regardless of whether they still met eligibility requirements. Now, HHSC is reviewing eligibility for millions of Texans, and the first data released indicate that the state's process is likely disenrolling many *eligible* Texans.

According to the data, 81% of Texans lost their Medicaid for “procedural reasons”—meaning that due to bureaucratic hurdles, they were removed from Medicaid by default, before HHSC could determine if they are still eligible.

“The review process is confusing and frustrating for families,” says Graciela Camarena, Child Health Outreach Program Director at Children’s Defense Fund-Texas, whose team helps families in the Rio Grande Valley with public benefit programs. Their clients have received notices at old addresses, in a language that is not their listed primary language, or after the deadline to submit documents has passed.

“We have even seen families receive multiple letters at the same time—one saying they qualify, another saying they do not,” says Graciela. “We’re also concerned that Texas Medicaid continues requesting documentation that is irrelevant to the case, such as proof of income for a job the client has never worked, or immigration status for a household member who isn’t applying for benefits. The issue is the process, not the people. These are mostly parents just trying to give their children a chance to stay healthy.”

“We have been sounding the alarm for over a year, urging the state to come up with a methodical, strategic plan to avoid massive Medicaid losses of eligible Texans,” says Adrienne Lloyd, Health Policy Manager at Children’s Defense Fund-Texas. “The new data highlight the devastating consequences of doing otherwise. Governor Abbott is so focused on removing ineligible people with breakneck speed that Texas is rushing forward with a process that’s cutting off thousands of *eligible* Texans—mostly children—from their only lifeline to affordable health care.”

Texas has one of the highest rates of procedural removals. Nationwide, states reported [71% of disenrollments](#) due to procedural reasons on average. June was the first month Texas could remove anyone from Medicaid through this process. Heading into July, Texas plans to initiate reviews of 3.6 million cases (or 60% of all Medicaid cases) in just 3 months—even though federal guidelines give states until March 2024 to complete the process.

This self-imposed deadline and the sheer, unprecedented scale sets the stage for chaos in an overwhelmed eligibility system already prone to errors. Experts anticipate growing backlogs, further Medicaid losses for still-eligible Texans, and delayed processing times of new Medicaid applications.

Worse, since children make up three quarters of Texans enrolled in Medicaid—[especially Black and Hispanic children](#)—they will suffer the consequences. That could mean more children missing doctor’s appointments, medications, and vaccines, and just before returning to school in the fall.

“The Governor can mitigate these harms by pausing to examine why this is happening—and fix it,” says Lloyd. “We urge him and Texas leaders to do just that, provide further data on who’s losing Medicaid by age, race, and disability status, and take advantage of the full timeline and flexibilities offered by the Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services to complete this process—so that Texas does not continue to wrongfully remove children, seniors, and people with disabilities from their health care.”

###