

Research Brief

Implications from Research Results

Presented at the October 2003 OHREC Public Meeting



The Medically Needy Program Survey

Background: The Medically Needy Program is a Federally-matched optional program of Medicaid. States may choose to provide Medicaid coverage and/or Medicare premium assistance to certain groups not otherwise eligible for Medicaid. Medically Needy Programs provide coverage for people who have high medical expenses so that by “spending-down” or proving their medical expenses cause them to fall below a state established income limit, they receive assistance with prescription drug coverage or with paying for health insurance. Thirty-four states currently have this type of program.

What did Oregon’s Medically Needy program cover?

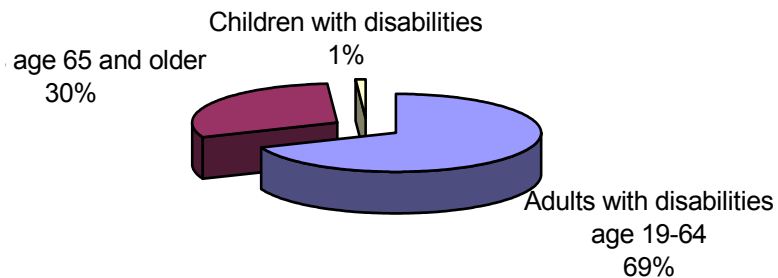
- ◆ Prescription drug coverage
- ◆ Mental Health services
- ◆ Transportation to access these services
- ◆ Payment for Medicare part B premiums, co-insurance and deductibles for certain eligible individuals
- ◆ Full range of Medicaid benefits for children

What happened to the Medically Needy program in Oregon?

- ◆ January 2003: state fiscal crisis resulted in 8,750 people losing benefits under Oregon's Medically Needy program.
- ◆ June 2003: prescription drug coverage added back for approximately 400 HIV and Transplant patients.
- ◆ Approximately 500 former enrollees were able to find coverage from other assistance programs.

OHREC is a unique collaborative of Oregon health services researchers, state agencies, stakeholders and advocates sharing and studying the impact of changes to the Oregon Health Plan. OHREC is designed to facilitate communication of research findings to policymakers, both statewide and nationally. Initial funding for the formation of the collaborative has been through Oregon's Robert Wood Johnson State Coverage Initiatives Grant through the Office of Oregon Health Policy and Research.

Demographics of the Medically Needy



How are those formerly enrolled in the Medically Needy program doing now?

- ◆ 60.6% have skipped doses or took less of a medication
- ◆ 63.8% have gone without filling a prescription
- ◆ 49% reported there are prescriptions they are supposed to be taking and are not

Financial Impact of spending more on medications:

- ◆ 59.9% have cut back on their food budget
- ◆ 48.5% have skipped paying other bills or paid bills late
- ◆ 20.5% have added credit card debt

Policy Implications: This survey provided timely information to policy makers in the state about:

- ◆ The relationship between out-of-pocket cost and adherence to a medication regimen
- ◆ The financial effect on patients who were cut

Future Policy Planning: The results of this survey have been used by the Oregon Office of Medical Assistance Programs (OMAP) to develop the policy framework for a newly created Medically Needy program, MEDS, that will be funded at significantly reduced levels.

Methodology used?

A telephone survey of a random, state-wide sample of 439 former Medically Needy enrollees.

Who supported the study?

This study was funded by OHP through Oregon's Robert Wood Johnson Foundation State Coverage Initiative Grant and the Office of Medical Assistance Programs.

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