

Alabama Community Health Centers: The Role of Medicaid

Community health centers (CHCs) deliver comprehensive, high-quality, affordable primary and preventive care and reduce overall costs for the health care system. CHCs improve access to essential health care services in communities with shortages of other providers, in both isolated rural and densely populated urban areas. They also integrate services such as behavioral health, substance use disorder treatment, dental care, and pharmacy. CHCs depend primarily on Medicaid and federal grants to sustain their operations.

Community Health Centers in Alabama

CHCs have service delivery sites across the state. ¹

- Alabama has 17 CHCs serving patients at 188 service sites.
- Of these sites, 41 percent are in rural areas.

Patients Served at Health Centers in Alabama

- In Alabama, 313,412 people were served by health centers in 2023, including more than: ¹
 - 77,000 children under age 18 (25 percent of patients).
 - 7,000 children served in school-based service sites,
 - 6,000 veterans, and
 - 38,000 older adults age 65+.
- Most (80 percent) of patients had income at or below the federal poverty level. ¹

Quality of Care at Health Centers in Alabama

CHCs delivered preventive and screening services to their patients. For 2023, CHCs in Alabama reported the following. ¹

- 72 percent of pregnant patients received early prenatal care.
- 89 percent of adult patients were screened for tobacco use and got help to stop if using.
- 75 percent of patients 12 and older were screened for depression and had a follow up care plan if needed.
- 31 percent of adult patients ages 46-75 were screened for colon cancer.
- 94,006 patients with hypertension (high blood pressure) received care.
- 41,384 patients with diabetes received care.

Medicaid's Role in Sustaining CHCs in Alabama

- The 107,135 Medicaid enrollees served by CHCs in Alabama in 2023¹ represent 10 percent—1 in 10—of the state's total Medicaid enrollees.²
- CHC patients enrolled in Medicaid include more than:
 - 57,500 Medicaid enrollees who are children under age 18,
 - 49,500 adults age 18 and older, and
 - 15,000 who are dually enrolled in Medicare and Medicaid
- Overall, 34 percent of patients were covered by Medicaid.¹
- Medicaid accounted for 24 percent of patient care revenue charges in 2023.¹

CHCs Economic Impact on Communities

- CHCs in Alabama created good jobs of many types, employing 2,613 total FTEs in 2023.¹
- These health care providers generate millions of dollars in positive economic impact in local communities.³

Impact of Medicaid Losses on CHC Patients and Care

Medicaid funding reductions now being considered by Congress would be devastating for patients and CHCs' ability to furnish care, resulting in widespread loss of insurance by health center patients as the state loses federal funding critical to maintaining program operations, and a crippling loss of Medicaid revenue needed to maintain CHC operations and staffing, followed by widespread reductions and closures.

Sources

1. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). *Health Center Program UDS Data: Expanded Summary*. 2023. US Department of Health and Human Services. <https://data.hrsa.gov/tools/data-reporting/program-data/state/AL>
2. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. *Enrollment data for December 2023*. US Department of Health and Human Services. Available at: <https://www.medicare.gov/medicaid/national-medicare-chip-program-information/medicaid-chip-enrollment-data/monthly-medicare-chip-application-eligibility-determination-and-enrollment-reports-data/index.html>. Retrieved January 12, 2025.
3. National Association of Community Health Centers. *Alabama Health Center Fact Sheet*. February, 2025. Available at: <https://www.nachc.org/community-health-centers/state-level-health-center-data-maps/>



Prepared by the Geiger Gibson Program in Community Health at The George Washington University.

January 2025