

California 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 California

CHCs have service delivery sites across the state.¹

- California has 172 CHCs serving patients at 2,308 service sites.
- Of these sites, 19 percent are in rural areas.

Patients Served at Health Centers in California

- In California, 5,457,053 people were served by health centers in 2023, including more than:¹
 - 1.6 million children under age 18 (29 percent of patients).
 - 137,00 children served in school-based service sites,
 - 33,000 veterans, and
 - 590,000 older adults age 65+.
- Nearly three quarters (72 percent) of patients had income at or below the federal poverty level.¹

Quality of Care at Health Centers in California

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

- 75 percent of pregnant patients received early prenatal care.
- 87 percent of adult patients were screened for tobacco use and got help to stop if using.
- 68 percent of patients 12 and older were screened for depression and had a follow up care plan if needed.
- 42 percent of adult patients ages 46-75 were screened for colon cancer.
- 860,578 patients with hypertension (high blood pressure) received care.
- 597,563 patients with diabetes received care.

Medicaid's Role in Sustaining CHCs in California

- The more than 3.7 million Medicaid enrollees served by CHCs in California in 2023¹ represent 27 percent—1 in 4—of the state's total Medicaid enrollees.²
- CHC patients enrolled in Medicaid include more than:
 - 1.4 million Medicaid enrollees who are children under age 18, and
 - 2.3 million adults age 18 and older, and
 - 270,000 who are dually enrolled in Medicare and Medicaid
- Overall, more than two-thirds (69 percent) of patients were covered by Medicaid.¹
- Medicaid accounted for 70 percent of patient care revenue charges in 2023.¹

CHCs Economic Impact on Communities

- CHCs in California created good jobs of many types, employing 58,214 total FTEs in 2023.¹
- These health care providers generated millions in total economic impact in local communities in 2021.³

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

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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. *California Health Center Fact Sheet*. February, 2025. Available at: <https://www.nachc.org/community-health-centers/state-level-health-center-data-maps/>



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