



**Andy Beshear**  
GOVERNOR

## **CABINET FOR HEALTH AND FAMILY SERVICES**

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**Statewide News Release**

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### **Kentucky Recognized for Medicaid Program Innovations**

*Kentucky Department for Medicaid Services honored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the National Academy for State Health Policy*

**FRANKFORT, Ky. (Oct. 4, 2022)** – Today, Gov. Andy Beshear announced Kentucky’s Medicaid program has received a 2022 Medicaid Innovation Award from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the National Academy for State Health Policy for enrollment innovations implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. The nonpartisan award recognizes states for demonstrating creativity, leadership and progress in their programs despite significant public health challenges in recent years.

“Quality health care is a basic human right and this administration will always take action to ensure every Kentuckian has access to the care they need and deserve,” said Gov. Beshear. “We are honored to be one of only six states to receive this recognition. Team Kentucky is committed to continuing this progress to make our commonwealth a better place for our people to live full, healthy lives for generations to come.”

The public health emergency declared in March 2020 led to a shift in the Department for Medicaid Services’ priorities. To ensure access to health care for all Kentuckians, a fast track to Medicaid enrollment was introduced. Eligibility for benefits was sped up, connecting Kentuckians quickly with help that many did not foresee that they would need. The expedited application process allowed screeners to identify if applicants were eligible for other types of help, including food assistance.

“In the early days of the pandemic, hundreds of thousands of working Kentuckians suddenly lost their employer-sponsored health insurance,” said Emily Beauregard, executive director of Kentucky Voices for Health. “When faced with an unprecedented public health crisis, Medicaid leaders pivoted quickly to provide temporary coverage through Medicaid presumptive eligibility. Their innovative approach to outreach and enrollment saved lives and provided the financial security workers and families needed to get back on their feet. It’s an essential part of our safety-net that is there to catch us when we least expect we’ll need it.”



“Serving vulnerable Kentuckians is at the center of our mission every day. Receiving this recognition from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the National Academy for State Health Policy is incredibly meaningful,” said Eric Friedlander, secretary of the Cabinet for Health and Family Services, of which Medicaid is an agency.

Kentucky Medicaid covers over 1.6 million individuals, of which over half are children covered under Medicaid or the Kentucky Children’s Health Plan. Approximately 625,000 Kentuckians are covered under Medicaid expansion. Over 60,000 providers are enrolled to offer access to physical health, behavioral health, pharmacy, hospital and other services.

Selected by a panel of expert advisers, Medicaid Innovation Award recipients are Medicaid agency leaders who implemented or enhanced initiatives that demonstrate innovative and unique approaches to improving the health and lives of Medicaid enrollees. Kentucky’s award was accepted by the department’s commissioner, Lisa Lee.

“We are honored to be recognized for serving Kentuckians, always striving to help build a healthier commonwealth,” Lee said. “We look forward to continuing our state and community partnerships to deliver member-focused care and improve health outcomes while strengthening our communities.”

Medicaid is a joint state-federal health insurance program that covers one in three Kentuckians, including elderly individuals and individuals with disabilities. In partnership with the federal government, states can tailor and enhance their Medicaid programs to meet the unique needs of their residents.

“Medicaid enables states to develop tailored, creative solutions to local challenges, and when faced with an unprecedented pandemic, Medicaid leaders dug deep to develop innovative approaches to care,” said Tara Oakman, interim managing director at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. “While it remains a difficult period for Medicaid programs, all states can learn from successes in other states in improving Medicaid access, care delivery and equity.”

Other states honored at the National Academy for State Health Policy’s annual conference in Seattle were Arizona, California, North Carolina, Minnesota and West Virginia.

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