



The Kid Angle

Kid-focused news from First Focus on Children

Sounding the alarm on children's health coverage February 17, 2022

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In just a few weeks, millions of kids could lose their insurance

The nation's Public Health Emergency (PHE) is scheduled to end on April 16. Though officials may extend it — courtesy of Omicron — its eventual expiration could take with it the health insurance of millions of children.

During the PHE, **states are prohibited from kicking people off Medicaid** if they want to receive enhanced federal funds. Once the emergency ends, however, states will begin re-evaluating people's eligibility, a process that inevitably leads to **qualified children and families losing coverage as a result of missed paperwork and other bureaucratic glitches.**

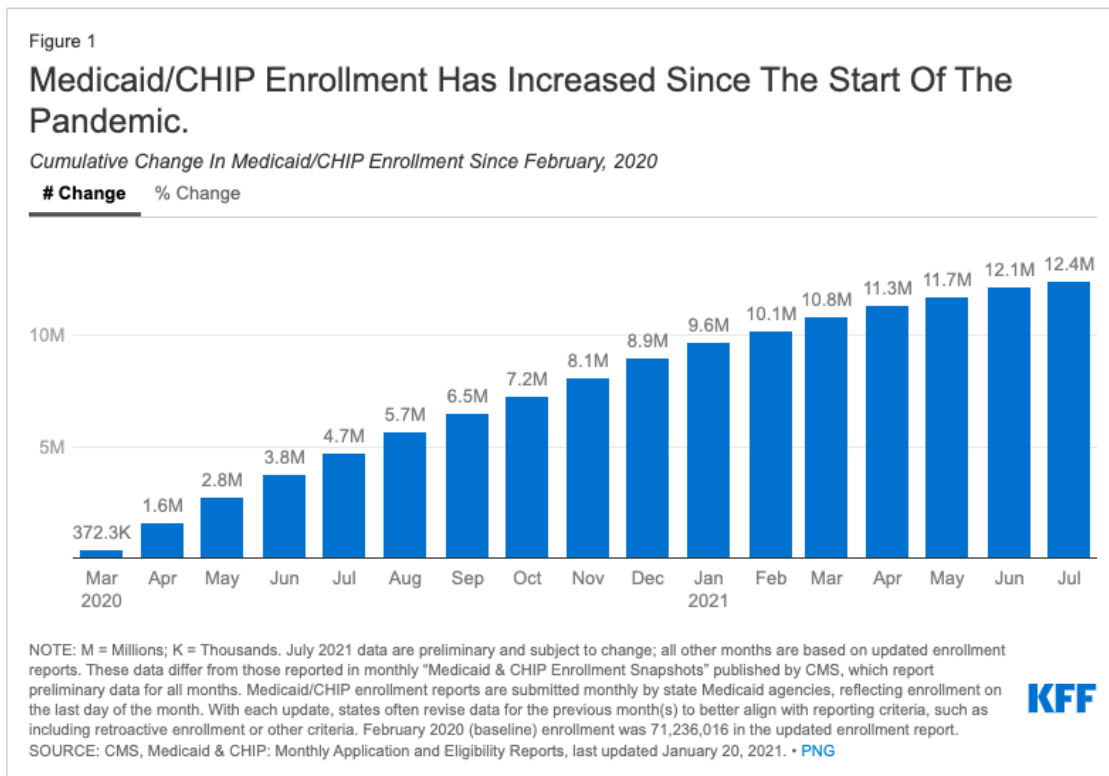
A report from Urban Institute/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, cited this week in [a deep-dive by National Journal](#), estimates that [nearly 6 million children could become disenrolled](#) during this process.

Here at First Focus on Children, we see several complicating factors that could add steam to the disenrollment:

- **Bounty hunters:** Some states plan to hire third-party administrators to lead disenrollment and will incentivize them with bonuses for saving money. For instance, [Politico recently reported](#) that the state of Ohio has

contracted with an outside vendor that will [automate eligibility redeterminations](#) in exchange for a cut of state Medicaid savings.

- **Collection of waived fees:** During the pandemic, many states waived premiums charged on the Children’s Health Insurance Program. But some states have left wiggle room to ask parents to pay those waived fees once the emergency ends.
- **Staffing:** Like so many other employers, state Medicaid and CHIP programs are short-staffed, meaning there are fewer workers to track down more children who are being unfairly disenrolled.
- **The Family Glitch:** Many children who are disenrolled from Medicaid likely will move into CHIP, but far fewer will gain coverage through the Affordable Care Act exchanges because of [“the family glitch.”](#) “This is going to disproportionately hurt kids, there’s no doubt in my mind,” says First Focus President Bruce Lesley.
- **Persistent Inequities:** Loss of the pandemic emergency provisions will put all enrolled families at risk, but will hit hardest in families with disabilities, experiencing homelessness, lacking English proficiency, currently undergoing treatment and in a host of other situations.



An analysis by the [Kaiser Family Foundation](#) finds that Medicaid/CHIP enrollment is increasing amid the coronavirus pandemic as data from February 2020 to July 2021 show that enrollment increased by 12.4 million or 17.4%.

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