Commonwealth of Virginia

Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services

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Virginia Medicaid Announces
12-Month Postpartum Coverage

Policy designed to improve maternal and infant health

RICHMOND – The Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) today announced the Commonwealth has received federal approval to guarantee that Medicaid members can maintain their health coverage for 12 months following pregnancy. Currently, some Medicaid members lose access to care 60 days after the end of a pregnancy. The expanded coverage will enable new parents to receive critical postpartum care, an important step in improving health outcomes for both parents and babies.

The extended coverage will be available to Medicaid members in 2022, pending state confirmation. Virginia will be one of the first states to adopt extended postpartum coverage for Medicaid members. Virginia Medicaid covers one in three births in the Commonwealth. The Medicaid agency estimates the new policy will extend coverage for more than 6,000 members per year.

U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Xavier Becerra and Chiquita Brooks-LaSure, Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, announced federal approval of the policy change during a visit to Richmond Thursday that also included an event highlighting pediatric vaccination efforts and a roundtable on maternal health.

"Extending postpartum coverage is another step toward Governor Ralph Northam's goal of eliminating racial and ethnic disparities in maternal mortality by 2025," said Virginia Secretary of Health and Human Resources Vanessa Walker Harris, MD. "This policy will improve the health and well-being of families of color and save lives across the Commonwealth."

In 2019, the Virginia Maternal Mortality Review Team found that nearly 70% of all women experiencing a pregnancy-associated death had at least one chronic condition.[1] The extension of comprehensive postpartum coverage includes regular check-ups, behavioral health visits, and specialty care, allowing individuals to receive treatment for chronic conditions and avoid preventable complications or deaths.

"Families have been at the forefront of Medicaid since the beginning," DMAS Director Karen Kimsey said. "We know pregnancy-related complications do not stop after 60 days. Twelve months of postpartum coverage reinforces Virginia Medicaid's mission to improve the health and well-being of Virginians through access to high-quality health care coverage."

"Ensuring the parent is covered also improves health outcomes for the baby," said Sarah Hatton, DMAS Deputy of Administration. "This is a policy that will benefit entire communities and empower parents to stay healthy."

"The heart-wrenching results of racial disparities in maternal health outcomes require swift and sustained action," said Cheryl Roberts, DMAS Deputy of Programs and Operations. "The ability to extend coverage for these members is a key tool in our overall maternal health strategy."

Individuals can apply for Medicaid online at CommonHelp. Application assisters are available at no cost to help with the process. Visitors to the CoverVA and the Spanish-language CubreVirginia websites can find listings of application assisters in their communities. Those who prefer to speak to someone by phone can call 833-5CALLVA (TDD: 1-888-221-1590). Translation and interpretation services are available in all languages.

Additional information about the policy change and other resources for pregnant and postpartum individuals is available on the CoverVA and CubreVirginia websites.

With more than 1.9 million members, **the Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS)** plays an essential role in the Commonwealth's health care system by providing lifesaving medical coverage to one in five Virginians, including more than 500,000 newly eligible adults who gained access to care through Medicaid expansion. For more information, visit www.dmas.virginia.gov.

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[1] https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/content/uploads/sites/18/2019/08/MMRT-Chronic-Disease-Report-FINAL-VERSION.pdf