



Florida Association of
Healthy Start Coalitions

RESTORE MEDICAID COVERAGE FOR UNINSURED PREGNANT WOMEN

Overview

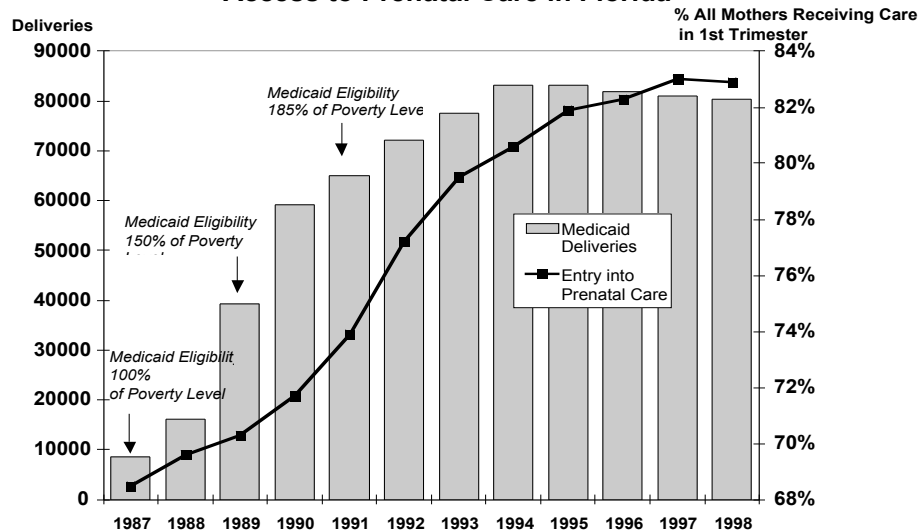
In 2004, the Florida Legislature eliminated coverage for uninsured pregnant women with incomes between \$28,275 - \$34,870 (150% - 185% of the federal poverty level for a family of four). Lawmakers used non-recurring funds to delay this cut until July 1, 2005.

More than 19,000 families—nearly one out of every three pregnant women currently covered by Medicaid—will be impacted by this roll-back in coverage. These families represent the working poor who are employed but do not have access to—or cannot afford— employer health care benefits. Eligible women currently receive this coverage only while they are pregnant. They are also eligible for coverage for family planning services through Medicaid for two years following delivery.

Medicaid Coverage Improves Access, Outcomes

Florida increased Medicaid eligibility for pregnant women with incomes up to 185% of poverty as part of Healthy Start in 1991. Since this time, the proportion of women seeking care early in their pregnancies has increased from 74% to 83% (Figure). Prenatal care reduces long-term Medicaid costs by reducing hospital stays after delivery, inpatient and outpatient services for infants and the number of disabled infants qualifying for Medicaid.¹

**Expanded Medicaid Eligibility Has Improv
Access to Prenatal Care in Florida**



Source: Medicaid delivery data from "The Effects of the Florida Medicaid Eligibility Expansion for Pregnant Women," by RAND (adjusted); ACHA Health Policy and Analysis. Early prenatal care from DOH Annual Statistics Report, 1987-1998.

Infant mortality in the state has dropped by 20% since Medicaid benefits have been expanded. Each increase in Medicaid eligibility in Florida has resulted in a corresponding decrease in the

¹ Hall, E. & Berlin M. (2004). Using Medicaid to support preterm birth prevention: five case studies, prepared for the March of Dimes. Quoted in Cut Costs—Not Prenatal Care. The Lawton & Rhea Chiles Center for Healthy Mothers & Babies, 2004.

state's infant mortality rate.² Studies of Florida's outcomes have demonstrated a positive relationship between access to prenatal care and improved birth outcomes (specifically, infant mortality and low birthweight).³ According to a state report, the odds of infant death for infants born to women with no prenatal care are 5.19 times as high as the odds for infants born to women who received prenatal care.⁴ Increased numbers of low birthweight infants, and very low birthweight infants will result in an increased population dependent on Medicaid for lifelong medical care.⁵

Eligibility Cuts Raise Costs to Providers, Communities

Cuts in Medicaid coverage for the working poor will not reduce health care costs. Instead, the full cost of providing prenatal care and related services will shift to local communities and health care providers. Unlike the state, these providers will not be able to take advantage of the federal match to support these services. The Florida Hospital Association estimates that Florida will lose nearly \$42 million in funding if cuts in Medicaid eligibility for pregnant women go into effect.⁶

Loss of Medicaid coverage directly impacts the availability of and access to other services, including family planning and Healthy Start. These services are critical to the state's continued success in improving birth outcomes.⁷

Recommended Action

The Florida Association of Healthy Start Coalitions strongly recommends the restoration of Medicaid eligibility for pregnant women with incomes up to 185% of the federal poverty level.

ADOPTED January 28, 2005.

² Ibid.

³ "The Effects of Florida's Medicaid Eligibility Expansion for Pregnant Women." *American Journal of Public Health* 88:371-376, 1998.

⁴ "Florida Infant Deaths and Low Weight Births Attributable to Absence of Prenatal Care and Tobacco Use of Mother." Florida Department of Health, 2002. Available: http://www.doh.state.fl.us/family/mch/docs/infant_deaths.pdf.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Florida Hospital Association. Background material provided January, 2005.

⁷ "The Effects of Florida's Medicaid Eligibility Expansion for Pregnant Women." *American Journal of Public Health* 88:371-376, 1998.