



Medicaid Expansion and Mental Health Expansion is Part of the Solution to the Mental Health Crisis January 2015

Montana can best support and treat individuals with serious medical health disorders by expanding Medicaid. Expanding affordable health care coverage will provide up to 70,000 Montanans with the coverage they need. Approximately 29,000 of those eligible for expansion are experiencing serious mental illness, in serious psychological distress, or have a substance use disorder.¹ In addition, billions in federal taxpayer dollars will be injected into Montana economy, lowering uncompensated care costs and creating thousands of jobs across the state.

Between 2014 and 2017, the federal government will cover the *entire* cost of this expansion. Starting in 2017, and for each year thereafter, federal funds will cover no less than 90 percent. States that delay expansion miss out on these years that are fully funded, and defer providing the health care coverage that thousands of Montanans suffering mental illness desperately need.

Mental illness disorders debilitate thousands of Montanans, impacting families and local economies across the state

Tragic and devastating disorders, such as major depression, schizophrenia, bi-polar disorder, substance use disorder, and panic disorders, affect the everyday lives of thousands of Montanans. More and more, these individuals suffer without access to health insurance or affordable services.

This has a devastating impact on our overall economy. When uninsured individual's mental health reaches a crisis, it drains limited local resources of police and fire departments, emergency rooms, and county jails. Nationwide, 70 percent of juveniles involved in the justice system are suffering from mental health disorders. Disability and unemployment costs rise as 75 percent of people with schizophrenia go on to develop a disability and fewer than 25 percent are gainfully employed. More than a quarter of U.S. hospital admissions and disability payments are for people with severe mental disorders, which increases health care costs. Sixty percent of those with mental health disorders are not receiving mental health services, with the cost of services as the major barrier to receiving care.¹

Expanding Medicaid will secure affordable health care coverage to thousands suffering from mental illness

Early access to health care services can have a dramatic impact on achieving long-term recovery and improved quality of life. Under the new federal health reform laws, Medicaid and private insurers must cover mental health and substance abuse care, under the "essential health benefits" package. Providing affordable access to health care services will reduce stigma, discrimination, and outright rejection that many with mental health disorders experience.

Improving services for those with mental illness disorders *starts* with expanding affordable access to health insurance.

¹ Joel E. Miller, *Dashed Hopes; Broken Promises; More Despair: How the Lack of State Participation in the Medicaid Expansion Will Punish Americans with Mental Illness*, American Mental Health Counselors Association, February 2014.