

How to Talk About Medicaid Work Reporting Requirements: Core Messages for State Communicators - Part 1

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Introduction

This messaging guide supports state Medicaid agencies in communicating with residents—including enrollees and applicants—about the implementation of work reporting requirements under H.R.1. The messages below reflect federal law and guidance available as of May 2026. This is Part 1; we expect to release updated messages (Part 2) as additional federal guidance is finalized.

How To Use This Guide

This resource is for state Medicaid communications staff, policy teams, and partner organizations preparing notices, letters, websites, frequently asked questions (FAQs), and training materials as part of outreach efforts to educate residents about Medicaid work reporting requirements. It is designed to help you communicate clearly and consistently about what people need to know now—what's confirmed, what's still being decided, and how you'll support them through transitions.

Use this guide in combination with the companion tool, [How to Talk about Medicaid Work Reporting Requirements: Language Recommendations for State Communicators](#), to ensure language consistency across all state materials.

Key Principles for Messaging New Requirements

- **Transparency builds trust.** Early, straightforward communication, even as details are still evolving, helps people understand what's required, what support is available, and that your agency is working with them through transitions.
- **Use plain language and avoid jargon.** Write and speak as clearly as possible. Use simple, everyday words instead of technical terms. Make sure materials are available in languages your community speaks.
- **Consistency matters.** Use the same terms across all your materials. If you say "work reporting" in a notice, use "work reporting" on your website and in your FAQ. Consider language used by other state programs, like SNAP or TANF. Inconsistent language creates confusion and erodes confidence.
- **Customize for your state.** Bracketed fields [like this] are placeholders for your state-specific information. Fill them in with your program name, contact info, examples, and timelines. Keep in mind that some enrollees may not realize they have "Medicaid" coverage or are enrolled in Medicaid expansion, and you may need to provide additional context.

Core Messages

What We Know Now

What's changing?

- Federal rules are changing how some people can access Medicaid. Starting later this year, some adults enrolled in [Medicaid] will need to report work, school, or volunteer activities to get or keep their coverage.
- To get or keep your [Medicaid], you will need to report that you work, go to school, volunteer, participate in a job program, or that you qualify for an exemption. These are what we call “work reporting requirements.”
- Medicaid work reporting requirements do not apply to everyone with [Medicaid] coverage. Some people, including those with special medical needs, do not have to meet these new requirements. These are what we call “exemptions.”
- You can also meet work reporting requirements by earning a minimum income (at least \$580 per month). You don't have to report the hours you worked—just show your earnings (like a pay stub).

When will work reporting requirements start?

- Work reporting requirements start [January 1, 2027]. When you need to start reporting will depend on your situation.
- Not everyone has to report. Medicaid work reporting requirements only apply to adults in [Medicaid expansion program]. You may not have to meet these requirements if you have a serious health condition, disability, or other situation.
- **If you are applying for Medicaid on or after January 1, 2027:** You may need to meet [Medicaid] work reporting requirements. [Medicaid agency] will explain what this means when you apply.
- **If you are already enrolled in Medicaid:** Your work reporting requirements will likely start at your first renewal in 2027. [Medicaid agency] will let you know if you need to meet these requirements.
- Beginning January 2027, [Medicaid] renewals will happen every six months for most adults. At each renewal, you'll need to meet work reporting requirements, unless you have an exemption.

Who has to report? Who doesn't?

- Medicaid work reporting requirements do not apply to everyone with [Medicaid] coverage.
- Medicaid work reporting requirements apply to adults with [Medicaid expansion]. This means people who are ages 19 to 64 and not eligible for Medicare.
- Some people in [Medicaid expansion] coverage do not have to meet work reporting requirements, depending on their situation.
- You may be exempt and do not need to report work, education, or volunteering if you:
 - Are an American Indian or an Alaska Native
 - Are a parent or caregiver of a child under 14, or of a person who has a disability and needs help with daily activities (like bathing, dressing, daily chores)
 - Are pregnant or have been within the past 12 months
 - Are a veteran with a disability
 - Were in foster care at age 18 and are younger than 26
 - Are receiving treatment for, or living with, a drug or alcohol use disorder

- Are blind or severely visually impaired
- Are living with a physical, intellectual or developmental disability that makes it hard to do daily activities (like bathing, dressing, daily chores)
- Are living with a mental health disorder such as [schizophrenia, major depression or OCD]
- Are living with a serious or complex health condition such as [an autoimmune disorder, heart or kidney failure, or other severe medical condition]
- Are already required to complete work requirements for food (SNAP) or cash benefits (TANF).
- Are in jail or prison now or were in the past 3 months.
- **For states providing short-term hardship exemptions:** You may also be exempt if you:
 - Recently received care in a hospital, nursing facility, psychiatric hospital or similar setting
 - Traveled outside your community to get medical care for yourself or a dependent, for example your child who lives with you
 - Live in a county with a federally-declared emergency (like a natural disaster)
 - Live in a county with a high unemployment rate (8 percent or 1.5 times the national unemployment rate)
- There may be additional situations where you don't have to meet this requirement. We'll explain all of them on [WEBSITE].
- We will help you figure out if you have to report work activities. We will check the information we already have from your Medicaid history and other programs you're enrolled in. We'll use that information to see if you won't need to report. If you do need to report, we'll tell you what to do next.

What We're Working On

- The federal government is giving states more instructions about how to implement work reporting requirements. We're expecting guidance by June 1, 2026. Our [Medicaid] team will use the federal instructions to finish the plans for our program.
- We're getting ready to help you understand what this change means for you. We will share more information by [INSERT MONTH (latest date state is required to notify enrollees based on lookback period)].
- You will get a notice by mail from [Medicaid agency] if work reporting requirements apply to you.
- We are working closely with eligibility workers, enrollment assisters, call center staff, and community partners. Together, we will provide clear information so people understand the new requirements.

What You Need to Do and How to Get Help

- Make sure [Medicaid] has your current contact information. We'll need it to send important updates about work reporting requirements and your coverage. Go to [website] to update your contact information today.
- If you move, get a new phone number, or change your email address, update it with [Medicaid] right away. [Include instructions to report a change]
- Visit [H.R.1 or work reporting requirements URL] to stay up to date as we finalize the new reporting requirements.

- If you have questions about the new requirements, contact us. Call [PHONE] or visit [WEBSITE] for information and answers to frequently asked questions. We want to make sure you understand what's coming.
- If you don't have Medicaid now and think you are eligible, don't wait to apply. Medicaid enrollment is available all year. If you apply in 2026, you will not have to meet work reporting requirements when you apply. You may need to meet these requirements later in 2027 when you renew your coverage.

Why This Matters: New information about work reporting requirements could discourage eligible people from applying for coverage they need. This message reassures them that they can apply for Medicaid now and understand work reporting requirements when they renew. Use this message when reaching out to people who haven't enrolled yet.

What's Ahead

- Keep an eye out for more information from [Medicaid agency] about work reporting requirements and whether they apply to you. We will send you a notice by mail and [other modality]. The notice will explain if you have to report work activities, what you need to do, and how to get help.
- Before the reporting deadline, we'll remind you what you need to do and when. We will also let you know if we need additional information. We want to make sure you have the information you need to stay covered.
- Our team will be ready to help. Every notice will include information about free assistance. We are also working with community partners to help spread the word and make sure everyone has the information and support they need.
- We're committed to keeping you informed every step of the way. Visit [URL] to learn more about work reporting requirements and how we're preparing to support you. Follow us on [SOCIAL MEDIA] for updates.

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ABOUT GMMB

This toolkit was prepared by Melissa Morales and McKenzie Perrow. GMMB is a full-service communications firm dedicated to creating real and lasting positive change in the world. We work across the healthcare sector and have expertise developing communications at the intersection of policy development and program implementation. For more than 40 years, we have been on the front line of issue-based communications, earning a reputation for shaping public opinion by developing research-based communications strategies that achieve real results. Our work has helped enroll millions of individuals in affordable health coverage and increased access to needed care and services. For more information, visit www.gmmb.com.