

Medicaid and Transition Age Youth

Imagine that you're 17 going on 18 years old. Can you remember that time in your life? Now imagine, being this age and preparing to leave residential care. Are you...prepared? As professionals who work in the world of youth residential treatment, we are working daily to prepare our youth for life outside of a residential setting. But in the dizzying day-to-day, do we think about things like: Medicaid?

Medicaid is social program that assists with the cost of medical care for children and adults with limited resources (Medicaid programs can vary state-by-state). For some residential centers, many of the youth served are covered by Medicaid- and even transition age youth (TAY)- approximately 18-24 years old- can continue to receive coverage if their state has expanded coverage. (Visit the [Health and Human Services site](#) to learn about your state's Medicaid eligibility.)

Medicaid programs can see some new eligibility criteria changes after it was [announced](#) in 2018 that work requirements could be included (states would have to complete a waiver application to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid). Currently, only a [few states](#) have the 'green light' to begin requiring adults to work (there are exceptions for each state) in order to be eligible for Medicaid benefits, and a handful of other [states](#) are going through the process for approval.

But what do Medicaid- and work requirements for eligibility- have to do with TAY in residential settings?

Although ACRC does take a position on specific, related policy and advocacy topics and initiatives- often in the form of a published position paper- that's not the goal with this piece. The goal of this piece is to stimulate thought and conversation around what other areas we should consider as we diligently work to prepare TAY for the 'real world' once they leave our care. What impact do the changes to Medicaid have on our world of residential youth care?

Some elements of the new Medicaid work requirements in some states will require routine status updates for employment, school enrollment, or other criteria as outlined in each state's rules. Are we training TAY on basic computer/technology skills? How can we educate TAY to use their problem solving skills to identify community outlets that offer access to the internet if they don't have access within their home/living situation? And what type of coaching can we offer TAY so that they are even aware of and recognize the value of having assistance to cover the cost of health care to begin with? Many TAY are aware of the progress they have made, but lack the foresight to proactively maintain their progress and continue to strengthen their mental health. Do our residential programs help them understand that this progress in their health, along with other domains, must be sustained through community based physical and mental health care? We should evaluate areas of our programming that serve TAY to identify objectives that can incorporate skills that TAY will need to maintain their progress and continue to grow their self-sufficiency developed in residential.

Many of us might agree that in the scope of all the needs of our youth in residential care, topics like Medicaid and the questions presented may fall lower on our priority lists. However, we at ACRC want to promote engagement of our membership in policy related happenings in their state and across the country, with the question of: *How does this impact the children we serve in residential settings?*

Beginning with this newsletter, the ACRC's Policy Committee will demonstrate how professionals at any level in the youth residential realm should be engaged in policy and advocacy; and support members by providing informational materials, trainings/webinars, and calls to action on legislation and other legal initiatives that will shape the lives of the youth we serve. We are raising our voices in 2019 and beyond by staying current with legislative changes, valuing the impact of research on effective policies and practices that support optimal childhood outcomes, and challenging ourselves to adopt a stance of appreciative inquiry to examine how changes

in the world around us will impact our field of youth residential care. For more information about the Policy Committee, including the up-coming *new* Policy Pre-Conference, please visit www.togetherthevoice.org.

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