

What to Know About Changes to Medicaid in New York & How They May Impact Formerly Incarcerated Individuals

In July 2025, H.R. 1 was signed into law. It makes several substantial changes to Medicaid, including requiring certain individuals nationwide to comply with “community engagement” requirements, also known as work reporting requirements, to enroll in or maintain Medicaid coverage. Specifically, it applies to people eligible for Medicaid through the Medicaid “expansion.”

This change goes into effect January 1, 2027.

Q What is “community engagement”?

A The new “community engagement” or “work requirements” require individuals age 19-64 who are eligible for or will be eligible for Medicaid expansion to report 80 hours per month of work or other activities including education and training activities and volunteering to maintain coverage.

Alternatively, this requirement can be satisfied if an individual has monthly income of at least \$580, which is the federal minimum wage (currently \$7.25) multiplied by 80 hours.

In 2026, New York State’s minimum wage will be:

\$17/hour in NYC, Long Island, and Westchester

- 35 hours of work per month will be equal to \$580 to satisfy the work requirements

\$16/hour for the rest of the state

- 36.25 hours of work per month will be equal to \$580 to satisfy the work requirement

The New York State minimum wage will likely increase in 2027.

Q Who will be impacted?

A Adults age 19-64 without dependent children who earn up to 138% FPL.

Q Who will not be impacted?

A Individuals who qualify for Medicaid based on one of the following:

- Pregnant and 12 months postpartum
- Parent or caretaker relative of a child 18 years or younger;
- Age 19-25 and formerly in the foster care system:
- Blind or Disabled (using Social Security Criteria)
- Under 19 or 65 or older

Please note: this is not an exhaustive list.

Q How can someone confirm if they are currently a Medicaid expansion enrollee?

A Call the Medicaid Helpline: [800-541-2831](tel:800-541-2831) or NYSOH: [855-355-5777](tel:855-355-5777), TTY: [800-662-1220](tel:800-662-1220).

Q Are there any exemptions?

A Yes, there are several ways individuals can be exempt from the requirement to report work to enroll in or maintain their Medicaid. They are:

- Individuals currently in jail or prison;
- Individuals who were in jail or prison at any point during the previous three (3) months;
- “Medically frail” individuals with one (or more) of the following medical conditions or special needs:
 - Substance use disorder
 - Disabling mental health condition
 - Serious or complex medical condition
- Individuals “participating in a drug addiction or alcohol treatment and rehabilitation program”;
- Individuals under 26 years old and in foster care when they turned 18;
- Individuals entitled to or enrolled in Medicare Part A and/or eligible for or enrolled in Medicare Part B;
- Individuals already complying with the work requirements for Temporary Assistance (TANF) and/or SNAP (also known as food stamps);
- American Indian or Alaska Native individuals or individuals determined eligible for services from the Indian Health Service;
- Veterans with a total disability;
- And others.

Individuals may need to be screened or receive a diagnosis to qualify for an exemption. If no exemptions apply, individuals must be able to have documentation to show they are working, participating in a work program, enrolled in an educational program, completing community service, or some combination of these activities for at least 80 hours per month.

Individuals should be on the lookout for guidance and information from New York State Medicaid about how to comply with work requirements or ensure they receive an exemption if they qualify.