

August 25, 2022

Planning and Policy Unit
Division of Medicaid and Medical Assistance
1901 North DuPoint Highway
P.O. Box 906
New Castle, Delaware 19720-0906

SUBJECT: Postpartum Continuous Eligibility

Dear Sir or Madam:

We welcome Delaware taking up the option to extend Medicaid coverage in the postpartum period and appreciate this opportunity to respond to [the Proposed Public Notice on Postpartum Continuous Eligibility](#). As child health researchers, clinicians, and policy experts, we offer comments in support of the proposed amendment to the Medicaid State Plan, with a particular focus on how postpartum continuous eligibility not only improves maternal health but also that of infants and children.

Medicaid is the largest payer of maternity care in the United States, covering nearly half of births in the country and [over 40 percent](#) of births in Delaware. In the year after birth, postpartum individuals often experience high levels of [disruption in health insurance coverage](#), health care access, and fragmentation of care. Maternal mortality and morbidity impact individuals of every background who have given birth, but people of color are [disproportionately affected](#). With maternal mortality rates rising [nationally](#) and [in Delaware](#), extending postpartum continuous eligibility for Medicaid is critical for reducing health disparities that contribute to maternal mortality.

[Fifty-two percent](#) of pregnancy-related deaths occur after the day of delivery, making consistent and continuous care after delivery essential. Postpartum care is also critical for identifying and addressing medical conditions that can have long-term consequences for both the individual who has given birth and their baby. For example, postpartum depression affects [one in seven](#) Medicaid beneficiaries after a birth. Untreated postpartum depression drives health disparities and can negatively interfere with a caregiver's attachment and engagement, significantly affecting the mental health, development and safety of their child.

[Recent CHOP PolicyLab research](#) highlights the importance of postpartum and interconception care, finding that preventive visits after a complicated pregnancy are associated with lower risk of complications in subsequent pregnancies. This work offers vital evidence on the importance of continuous access to care after delivery, and by extension the importance of improved access to care through levers like health insurance coverage. Other research has also shown that expanding postpartum Medicaid coverage

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increases use of outpatient preventive care and significantly decreases the share of individuals who have given birth with unmet medical needs due to cost of care.

Finally, there is robust, increasing evidence that parental health directly impacts the health of their children. Children are healthier when their caregivers are healthier. Furthermore, research has shown that parental enrollment in Medicaid increases the probability that a child will receive an annual well-child visit by almost 30 percent.

While continuous health insurance coverage is only one piece of ensuring access to health care and improving health outcomes for those who have recently given birth and their children, it is an essential one. We would welcome the opportunity to further engage with you about all of your efforts to improve maternal and infant health as Delaware implements and evaluates the impact of extending postpartum Medicaid in the years ahead.

Sincerely,

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