

New Report Recommends First-Ever Approach to Medicaid Coverage of Services for Opioid Use Disorder in Prisons and Jails

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As the toll of the opioid epidemic grows, policymakers are, for the first time, turning to Medicaid as a tool to advance access to opioid use disorder (OUD) treatment for people who are incarcerated. Today, very few people in prison and jail who could potentially benefit from OUD services receive them. Historically, Medicaid has excluded coverage for these and nearly all other services to Medicaid-eligible beneficiaries while incarcerated. This year, the federal government and some states began using Medicaid waiver authority to pioneer the first changes to expand access to OUD treatment and other services for people who are incarcerated. These new changes authorize Medicaid to cover select services in the period immediately before a Medicaid beneficiary leaves prison or jail, modifying Medicaid's longstanding exclusion of services provided in carceral facilities. In addition, Congress recently enacted national changes to Medicaid policy for services provided to youth entering and exiting incarceration.

Some state and federal policymakers are discussing going beyond these recent reforms to allow Medicaid to cover services in prisons and jails throughout an individual's period of incarceration if that person is Medicaid eligible. To inform state and federal policymaking, Viaduct Consulting, LLC has issued a first of its kind [report](#) recommending services and standards for OUD care in state prisons and jails that could advance access to high-quality care and improve health outcomes. The recommendations were developed by reviewing existing evidence-based programmatic standards that guide the delivery of community and carceral OUD services, examining Medicaid policies for community OUD services, and considering the specific circumstances of correctional settings that differ from those of community health care settings.

The report, "[Recommendations for Medicaid Coverage of Opioid Use Disorder Services In Jails and Prisons](#)," is the first in a three-part series that recommends ways to advance quality, evidence based OUD services in state prisons and local jails by allowing Medicaid to cover those services. The two subsequent reports containing recommended performance measures and payment strategies to advance provision of Medicaid-covered OUD services in prisons and jails will be issued later this year.

These three reports are authored by consultants Daniel Teixeira da Silva and John O'Brien; Vikki Wachino, Executive Director and Founder of the Health and Reentry Project; and Greg Williams, Ashley DeGarmo, and Bamidele Odusote of [Third Horizon Strategies](#).

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