

Health and Reentry Project (HARP) Response to CMS' Approval of Five New Medicaid Reentry Waivers

Washington, D.C., September 25, 2026 — The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) this week approved four states' and the District of Columbia's proposals to strengthen access to services and continuity of care for people who are returning to communities from prison and jail. The Health and Reentry Project welcomed CMS' momentum-building [announcements](#), which advance ongoing efforts to build stronger reentry programs to improve health and public safety.

With these approvals, Louisiana, Minnesota, Maine, Nevada, and Washington, D.C., can now use Medicaid to cover a targeted set of services starting prior to an individual's release from prison or jail. The states' proposals, which use Medicaid section 1115 demonstration waivers to improve access to needed health care services as people leave incarceration, aim to improve public safety and public health. With the approvals, there are now 22 states plus Washington, D.C. with approved Medicaid reentry waivers. Another four states have pending waivers.

Vikki Wachino, Founder and Executive Director of HARP, issued the following statement:

"CMS' approval of Louisiana, Minnesota, Maine, Nevada, and Washington, D.C.'s proposals to strengthen access to care as people leave incarceration is an important step to improve health and public safety. It also builds on an ongoing bipartisan commitment at the federal, state and local levels to support continuity of care as people return to communities. HARP is pleased to recognize the leadership of each of these states and the Trump administration."

These new waivers allow Medicaid coverage of case management, medication assisted treatment for substance use disorders, and a medication supply at release for eligible individuals starting up to 60 days before release from incarceration in the three states and Washington, D.C. Nevada and Washington, D.C.'s waiver approvals will provide a longer pre-release coverage period, 90 days, in youth corrections. The waiver approvals also authorize coverage of peer support services as a pre-release service, offer Medicaid outreach and application assistance to people who are incarcerated, and emphasize the importance of program integrity and stewardship of federal Medicaid funds.

Evidence suggests that access to health care, and especially care for mental health conditions and substance use disorders, not only improves health but also reduces arrests and other law enforcement interactions. When people leaving incarceration are healthier they are better equipped to secure jobs, find housing, and foster a path towards lasting change and wellbeing.

With more than seven million releases of people from jails and nearly half a million releases of people from prison each year, strengthening continuity of care at release plays an essential role in public safety. [Sheriffs' groups and other correctional and law enforcement leaders](#) have long supported a role for Medicaid in supporting care at reentry.

The CMS waiver approvals are the latest step in bipartisan efforts to improve access to health care as people leave incarceration. Those efforts include the SUPPORT Act, which President

Trump signed in 2018, and which established the opportunity for states to obtain Medicaid reentry waivers, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023, which authorized Medicaid to cover [a targeted set of pre-release services for young people](#) in every state, and the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2024, which requires that states suspend, rather than terminate, Medicaid eligibility during incarceration.

State and local governments that are interested in technical assistance from HARP to support health and reentry implementation can email TA@healthandreentryproject.org to learn more.

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About HARP

The Health and Reentry Project (HARP) is dedicated to building healthier, safer communities by improving access to health care as people return to community from incarceration. HARP provides expert policy analysis and education, supports state and local implementation of new policies, and convenes cross-sector stakeholders from health care and criminal justice, people who are directly impacted, and community-based organizations. For more information, contact media@healthandreentryproject.org or visit our website, www.healthandreentryproject.org.