

## MEDICAID: A Women's Health Program

Medicaid is critical to low-income American women. Twelve million women rely on Medicaid for health care. Medicaid provides access to vital health services at all stages of life, including acute and preventive care, pregnancy-related services, nursing home, and long-term care.

- Medicaid covers over 5 million women of childbearing age.
- One-third of poor women are covered by Medicaid.
- Women account for 70% of enrollees above age 15.

### What is Medicaid?

Medicaid provides coverage and access to health care services for our nation's most needy. In return for federal matching funds, states provide certain health care services to certain populations ("mandatory populations") and can – and often do – expand coverage to other populations and cover additional services.

### Women are the Majority of the Adult Medicaid Population

- Medicaid is an essential source of health coverage for low-income pregnant women.
- Women are more likely to work at home or part-time and are therefore unable to receive employer-based health coverage.
- Women have longer life-spans, increasing their need for long-term care.
- Women are more likely to be employed in low-paying jobs that do not offer health insurance.
- With federal help and approval, many states have opted to take advantage of special Medicaid programs covering women for breast and cervical cancer treatment, family planning services and prenatal care.

### Why is Medicaid critical to women?

Medicaid provides low-income women of all ages with access to critically-important health services including acute care, physician and hospital care, and family planning care. States can also choose to cover such "optional" services as prescription drugs, vision and dental care, and home-based care. Under Medicaid, pregnant women can access comprehensive prenatal and post-partum care, and elderly

women often rely on Medicaid for access to nursing-home and long-term care services.

### Medicaid is the single largest public funding source for HIV/AIDS care in the United States.

Over half of adults living with AIDS in the US – more than 160,000 people – rely on Medicaid for their health care. In 2000, Medicaid spent over \$4 billion on HIV/AIDS related care.

**Medicaid provides treatment for serious diseases like breast and cervical cancer.** In 2000, the federal government passed the Breast and Cervical Cancer Treatment Act, giving states the option of providing health coverage for breast and cervical cancer to low-income women who are not otherwise eligible for Medicaid coverage.

**Medicaid pays for 40% of births in the United States.** Medicaid requires states to cover pregnancy-related and 60 days of postpartum care services for women with incomes up to 133% of the federal poverty level. Over three-quarters of states have expanded care beyond these levels.

**Medicaid is the largest public funding source of family planning care.** States are required to cover family planning under Medicaid. Over 5 million American women rely on Medicaid for access to birth control, gynecological services, and testing and treatment of STDs. States are also required to cover abortions in cases of rape, incest and life endangerment, and have the option of covering abortion in broader circumstances using state funds.

**Elderly women rely on Medicaid for prescription drug coverage, nursing-home and home-based health care services.** Three quarters of nursing home residents are women, and Medicaid covers 70% of nursing home residents in the United States. Medicaid also closes gaps in Medicare coverage by paying premiums and deductibles for low-income women and providing prescription drug coverage – a benefit not currently available under Medicare.

#### SOURCES:

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- The Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured. Medicaid's Role for Persons with HIV/AIDS. October 2000.
- National Governor's Association. MCH Update 2001: Trends in State Health Insurance Coverage of Pregnant Women, Children and Parents.