



# Medicaid Makes A Difference

Helping People to Obtain  
Health Insurance and Stay Healthy

Northwest  
Federation of  
Community  
Organizations



Idaho Community Action Network  
January 2001

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# *Introduction*

Consider this: If you did not have health insurance, what would your health be like? Would you be able to afford regular visits to the doctor? Would you be able to afford your medications? Would you be able to afford hospital stays or surgeries? For the 214,000 people in Idaho who do not have health insurance, securing such basic health care can be considerably difficult.<sup>1</sup> The high premiums associated with private or employer-based insurance often make purchasing an individual or family plan impossible. For the uninsured, health care is a luxury item — it is an expense that comes after there is a place to live, food on the table, and a way to keep their home warm. And perhaps worst of all, the high cost of coverage forces many of the uninsured to delay seeking regular treatment or to forego taking their prescribed medications, often at the expense of their own health.

Without access to basic health coverage, the uninsured are often unable to seek medical attention until their health worsens, causing them to take trips to the emergency room for care which could have been provided much earlier and much more effectively. When the uninsured seek care in an emergency room, they are usually unable to pay for the treatment that they receive and thus, the cost is passed on to those who can pay. This practice has the effect of increasing the costs of health care for everyone else. “Many of these Americans seek care only when their health problems require emergency or urgent intervention, which exacts a toll both on their health and on the nation’s health care costs.”<sup>2</sup> When compared to the insured, the “uninsured tend to have more serious, preventable illnesses that threaten their work productivity and ability to retain jobs.”<sup>3</sup>

It is therefore in everyone’s best interest that all Idahoans have health insurance. As the President of the American College of Physicians stated, “Living without insurance is a serious health risk that needs to be treated with the same sense of urgency as not wearing seatbelts or drunk driving.”<sup>4</sup>

Fortunately, many children and families in Idaho do have access to health insurance through the state's public health care program — Medicaid. These children and families are able to visit the doctor on a regular basis and therefore do not have to choose between paying for their medications and paying for their rent or their electricity. Children with Medicaid are able to receive regular preventative care, such as their necessary immunizations, as well as treatment for their injuries and illnesses.<sup>5</sup> Because Medicaid recipients are able to access preventive care, they can avoid costly emergency room visits by preventing and treating their health care problems as they arise.

To show how Medicaid is beneficial to families, the following pages are filled with stories from parents and their children from across Idaho who are grateful for the help that Medicaid has given them. Their stories also illustrate how difficult it would be for them if their Medicaid benefits were to be cut.

Their experiences show all of us exactly how important Medicaid is to the health of Idaho's families. Because the Idaho legislature has decided to invest in Medicaid, Medicaid has made a positive difference in these people's lives. The legislature's investment has been money well spent to keep Idaho families healthy and to give children a fair chance at a healthy life. "Without the needed coverage to access... important health care services, we are placing the children's well-being and productivity at risk."<sup>6</sup>

## *Kyle, age 5 ~ Boise, Idaho*

“The doctor makes me feel fine when I go to see the doctor when I am sick. The doctor gives me medicine to make me feel better.”



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Access to all sorts of health care services, such as general health, eye care, dentistry, hearing services, or mental health services “improves the lives of children, avoids the need for more costly interventions later, and is the right approach to ensure access to appropriate health care for our nation’s most vulnerable population — our children.”<sup>7</sup>

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## *Sugar ~ Grangeville, Idaho*

“When our five children were not receiving Medicaid benefits, we put off taking them to the doctor until things got bad. Now that our children have Medicaid, we are able to take our children to the doctor on a more regular basis. Their health has improved because of Medicaid. Plus, we can now afford the medication, counseling, and anger management classes for our son with ADHD. Without Medicaid helping us with our children’s medical care, we would go into the poor house. Because of Medicaid, our children are healthier and happier now because they know that they will get the health care that they need. We are very grateful for Medicaid being there to help our children. As for my boyfriend and I, my boyfriend gets health insurance for himself from his work, but I am not able to obtain health insurance because my job is only part-time, so I do not go the doctor unless things get bad.”

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Delayed care could result in an individual’s illness becoming more severe than it would have been; delayed care can result in a higher chance of death or disease.<sup>8</sup>

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Part-time work rarely includes the benefits of health insurance.<sup>9</sup>

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*Rhonda ~ Kamiah, Idaho*

“My husband and I both work, but I only earn around \$200 a month and my husband’s income varies since he is a logger. My husband could obtain health insurance through his employer for our three children, but the employer’s health insurance costs too much. The cost of the insurance would come out of my husband’s paycheck and that is money that we need to live on. So that is why we got Medicaid for our children so that they could have general health insurance. Before they were on Medicaid, I would only take them to the doctor when they got sick because of the cost of the health care. Medicaid has helped us out a lot because we have a daughter who has athletic asthma of which the medication for that is really expensive. If our children’s Medicaid benefits were to be cut, it would hurt us really bad because of the medication for our daughter and also just for their general health.”

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“Two-thirds of those without health insurance coverage cite the high cost of insurance as the main reason they are uninsured.”<sup>10</sup>

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*Cameron ~ Lewiston, Idaho*

“Our three children have received Medicaid benefits since they born. The two youngest children are currently really sick and need Medicaid to be able to go to the doctor on a regular basis. Without it, we could not afford to take our children to the doctor. The costs of health care are too high for us on our income that includes only our SSI check because we are disabled. We would have to use the money we receive from SSI to pay for our rent and for our electricity and forego health care. Medicaid has helped us out a lot in being able to care for our children with regular check-ups as well as helping with the youngest two children’s illnesses.”

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“Unmet health care needs reduce a child’s ability to grow into a healthy and productive adult.”<sup>11</sup>

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## *Bryson, age 11 ~ Heyburn, Idaho*

“The doctor makes me feel better when I am not feeling very good. He also gives me allergy shots that make it so I am not so sneezy or stuffy.”

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“Children without health insurance or with gaps in coverage are less likely to have routine check-ups, less likely to be immunized, and less likely to receive preventative dental care,” as well as other preventative care.<sup>12</sup>

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“Tooth decay is the single most common chronic disease of childhood,” and “tooth decay is increasingly a disease of low and modest income children” because they are not getting the “dental services [that] they need.”<sup>13</sup> Dental problems affect children’s lives because they “have the consequence of wearing down the stamina of children and defeating their ambitions.”<sup>14</sup>

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As for hearing services, “persistent [and untreated] infections contribute significantly to the increasing number of infants who develop hearing loss later in life.”<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, “children who are unable to hear well can have trouble performing well in school and trouble interacting normally with their families and friends.”<sup>16</sup> Thus, “if children receive the appropriate hearing services early in life, they are less likely to need more costly care later on,” and it will “optimize speech and language development.”<sup>17</sup>

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### *Karen and Alex ~ Boise, Idaho*

“Two of our children have been on Medicaid because they are special needs children. Without Medicaid, certain things that the children need we would not be able to get because they are expensive. For example, they need their medication, they need the doctor visits, and they need special items, such as a special bed. We are entirely grateful for Medicaid being there to help us deal with our situation because we are able then to take good care of our kids in the way that they need to be cared for.”

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“Over 12 million people in the United States need help with basic activities of daily living requiring long-term care services — that is, personal, social and medical supports provided at home, in the community, or in institutional settings.”<sup>18</sup> “Long-term care is the care needed to cope when physical or mental disabilities interfere with an individual's ability to perform” such basic tasks as “eating, bathing, dressing...and using the bathroom... on their own.”<sup>19</sup>

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### *Ruth, age 9 ~ Heyburn, Idaho*

“I don't like going to the doctor, but the doctor does make me feel better when he gives me the right medicine. The medicine tastes bad, but when I get really sick and don't feel really good, it makes me feel better.”

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Although most children are relatively healthy, they need “immunizations, regular preventative care, and professional treatment for acute illnesses and injuries” to stay healthy.<sup>20</sup> Children who do not have a usual source of care, or who forego treatment until their illness becomes worse, risk the chance of a more serious outcome than would have been the case had the child sought health care in the beginning. For example, ear infections that are left untreated can result in hearing loss as well as speech and language difficulties.<sup>21</sup>

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## *Jane ~ Boise, Idaho*

“I used to own my own business when I was able to do so and I paid my taxes; I was a productive member of society until my health totaled out about ten years ago. Now I just need help and Medicaid has helped me to take care of my child and myself. Because of Medicaid, my 17-year-old son, who also has health problems, has a safe environment to live in and his mother to take care of him. Medicaid enabled me to raise my child instead of him being placed in a foster home. I have six different severe health conditions that make it so that I depend on PCS to send me a helper to help me to undress, to get into the shower, to comb my hair, to drive for me, and even to shave my legs. Without my helpers that Medicaid pays for, I would be in terrible shape and I would be in a nursing home without PCS, or end up in a hospital more than I already do. If I did not have Medicaid to help me out, I probably would give up all hope and become depressed. Because I was able to raise my son, my son will be a very big plus to society; he wants to become a Salvation Army officer. I am entirely grateful for Medicaid allowing me to be here for my son and myself.”

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“Home care is not expensive compared to the cost of institutional care. For many conditions, home health costs are one half to one third — sometimes as little as one tenth — of costs for comparable hospital care.”<sup>22</sup>

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Medicaid is extremely important to those who need long-term care. This is because Medicare and private insurance pay very little of the cost of the long-term care. Medicare is primarily responsible for “acute health care needs,” while Medicaid “is the primary source of insurance coverage for long-term care.”<sup>23</sup>

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While the number of elderly with disabilities is declining, the baby boom generation is aging which “will bring about a significant increase in the demand for long-term care.”<sup>24</sup> Thus, the legislature should not decrease the amount of funds used in the Medicaid program for long-term care. In fact, it seems best that the funds used in the program be increased.

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### *Crystal ~ Boise, Idaho*

“As a person who is unable to do everyday living things like cooking or bathing for myself because of my disability, it is important that Medicaid is there to help me pay for my medical bills. Before I had Medicaid, I would not go to the doctor because the cost of the medical care for my disability impeded me from seeking such care. Now that I have Medicaid, I check any problems I might have with my doctor to see what, if anything, I should do. The only problem I do have with Medicaid is that it is hard to get equipment approved that I desperately need and I was recently told that I would soon have to use a wheelchair.”

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“The services that Medicaid covers are critical for disabled persons to maintain their functioning and independence and the breadth of Medicaid's benefit package frequently meets the needs of disabled persons better than private health plans.”<sup>25</sup>

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### *Coty, age 9 ~ Grangeville, Idaho*

“I like being able to go to the doctor when I am sick. My doctor gives me medicine and stuff to make me feel better. He also makes it so I can stay feeling good. My doctor is really nice to me and he is the best doctor I’ve ever had.”

### *Frances ~ Kamiah, Idaho*

“Before I had Medicaid, I was only able to go to the doctor because my husband was working for the county and I was able to be on his health insurance. Now that we are divorced and I only get \$500 a month in income from SSI and Social Security, I really am grateful that Medicaid is there for me. Without Medicaid, I would not be able to afford to go to the doctor, obtain my medications, get my walkers or canes, or obtain the catheters that I need to do self-catheritization. These things total around \$1,500 a month. I just simply could not afford all of this on my income. I also have a helper who comes to take care of me during the week, while my ex-husband takes care of me on the weekend so that my helper has the weekend off. Without Medicaid, there is no way that I would be anything but dead. I need Medicaid really bad because there is no one else to take care of me and I need the medications and the catheter to stay alive. Medicaid has helped me a great deal.”

### *Tom ~ Caldwell, Idaho*

“My wife and I have been using Medicaid since 1993. Both of us have health problems and use the services of a home nurse. I have had some heart problems and I also have problems with my legs that has placed me on a disability. My wife has had a triple bypass. Medicaid has been wonderful for us because they have paid the difference on our health care bills. Our medication for the both of us is about \$1,500 a month. We would not know what to do without Medicaid — we would not be able to afford our medications without it. Medicaid has been really great for us. The only problem is that our son, whom we fought hard to get coverage for, will be kicked off the CHIP program only because he is turning 19.”

### *Randy, age 17 ~ Boise, Idaho*

“I really appreciate being able to go to the doctor when I get sick or when I get injured. I’m not sure what would happen if I didn’t have insurance because health care can be very expensive. So I am glad that I am able to go to doctor, especially when I get hurt, because who knows what would happen to me if I wasn’t able to go to the doctor. In a way, I feel safer knowing that I am able to go to the doctor when I get sick or injured.”



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“American adolescents face serious health challenges, including high rates of suicide, pregnancy, HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, substance abuse, mental and emotional illness, [smoking] and poor nutrition.”<sup>26</sup> Thus, it is important that states help teens get the health care that they need. Medicaid has the opportunity to help these teens to meet their health care needs.

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### *Hazel ~ Kamiah, Idaho*

“My husband currently uses medicine that costs about \$800 a month. We would not be able to afford his medications if Medicaid was not there to pay for them. His illness is really hard on us and it would be harder on us if his Medicaid benefits were cut. We need Medicaid to pay for his medications. So far Medicaid has been really good about helping us with our medical bills and so, we are thankful for Medicaid.”

*John ~ Kuna, Idaho*

“I am the caretaker of two mentally challenged individuals who have been using Medicaid for several years. Without Medicaid, they could not afford their medical care because they are not able to take care of themselves in order to obtain even other necessary items. They do not understand about co-payments or setting up appointments to go to the doctor; I have to do those things for them. If their Medicaid benefits were cut, I would not be able to take care of them; they would have to go to a shelter home or a group home where it would be more expensive. It is cheaper for the taxpayer to pay one person than to have to pay for several individuals in a home. Along with the high expense of a group home, it would hinder them becoming what is considered ‘normal.’ In other words, they would not modify their behavior to what is deemed acceptable. When they were in an institution, one of the individuals I care for would talk out loud whenever he wanted to instead of waiting his turn to talk and he would also talk to himself. Now, he waits his turn to talk whenever he goes to meetings or other social events. Thus, the two individuals are more able to become ‘normal’ because they are able to live in a home with ‘normal’ people and because they are able to interact with ‘normal’ people in the town they live in. Medicaid has been very beneficial for them.”

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“Medicaid...serves a more vulnerable and severely limited group of disabled persons than are covered by private payers.”<sup>27</sup>

Medicaid is extremely necessary for these individuals because private insurance may not give them the insurance they need because of their disability.<sup>28</sup>

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“Prescription drugs now constitute the largest category of out-of-pocket payments for the elderly, and the costs are rapidly rising.”<sup>29</sup> Medicare currently does not cover prescription drugs. “Total expenditures for prescription drugs increased by 85 percent between 1993 and 1998, with an estimated 17 percent increase from 1997 to 1998 alone, or more than four times the rate of increase for all health care expenditures for that period.”<sup>30</sup> Thus, Medicaid is extremely helpful for those whose prescription drug costs are high and whose costs are too much for them to be able to pay on their own.

## *Karen ~ Lewiston, Idaho*

“For the past six years, I have been able to get my medications that total \$1,200 per month. The reason I can get my medications is because Medicaid is there to help me out. I recently was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis and in 1993, I had a severe car accident. Both render me unable to work. If the legislature passed a law that created a co-payment for my medications, it would put me in a great financial bind. I would have to decide among eating, paying rent, or paying for my medications with my SSI and AADD checks. So I could either starve or pay for my medications. I could either have a roof over my head or pay for my medications. In other words, I simply could not afford my medications without Medicaid. With being able to use Medicaid, I am healthier than I would be without it. Medicaid has made a huge difference in my life.”



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Many Americans need prescription drugs. Ninety-one percent of Americans say they have taken prescription drugs, while 54 percent say they take prescription drugs regularly. Thirty percent say they have more than five prescription drugs currently. Eight percent say they spend at least \$1,000 or more out of their own pockets on prescription drugs.<sup>31</sup>

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## *Dominic, age 17 ~ Boise, Idaho*

“I have a lot of neck problems which require me to have MRIs done pretty much every week. So without Medicaid, it would be really hard on my family. We probably wouldn’t be able to afford it. I work at the Albertsons and I see that drugs for certain illnesses can cost at least \$150 a month. I know a lot of families would not be able to afford these medications without any type of health insurance. For me, my neck problems cost thousands of dollars and I don’t think we would be able to treat my problems without Medicaid. My mom also has health problems in which she really needs Medicaid. So I really appreciate that Medicaid is there to help my mom and myself with our health care.”

*Peggy ~ Nezperce, Idaho*

“I applied for Medicaid because of my disability. I have been able to use Medicaid since 1989. If my Medicaid benefits were cut, it would affect me dramatically. Medicaid pays for all of my prescriptions and there would be no way that I would be able to pay for that. I would not be able to go to the dentist or go see an eye doctor because Medicaid helps me obtain those services. It would be terrifying without Medicaid because Medicaid pays for things that Medicare does not begin to cover. I only get \$532 a month in income and this is not nearly enough for me to obtain the prescriptions, dental services, and vision services that I need. Medicaid has helped me tremendously and I do not know what I would do without it.”

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The cost of prescription drugs makes it difficult for many to pay for them. In a survey done by the Kaiser Family Foundation along with the Jim Lehrer NewsHour, it was found that almost 29 percent say they have not filled a prescription because of the cost, 25 percent say they have to give up other things to buy prescription drugs for themselves or their families, and ten percent report having to give up basic necessities, such as adequate food, to pay for prescription drugs.<sup>32</sup>

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*Krista ~ Boise, Idaho*

“I have been using Medicaid because of my disability. I have epilepsy. This disability comes with really expensive medications that I must take each day. Sometimes I have bad seizures that require me to go to the hospital, but our car is currently broken. However, because I have Medicaid, my husband, Wayne, will call for an ambulance whenever I have a bad seizure because we know Medicaid will cover it. If I didn’t have Medicaid, then he would not call for an ambulance because he knows that we would not be able to afford it. My epilepsy then would get worse without Medicaid. My husband’s 17-year-old brother, Randy, lives with us and he also uses Medicaid. He has had injuries in the past that included breaking his bones, as well as spraining his muscles. Medicaid is good for injuries but it is also good for general illness. Along with Randy, I have a son and we never know when either Randy or my son will get sick. So it is reassuring to know that we have Medicaid there to help us out. Because of Medicaid, we were able to go to the doctor for Randy’s injuries, or for when Randy or my son get sick, or for myself. Without it, we might not have been able to. Thus, Medicaid has helped us out and I like it.”

### *Jim ~ Boise, Idaho*

“I have been using Medicaid in Idaho since 1988. Before I moved to Idaho, I lived in California where I used Medical. I use the Medicaid benefits because of my disability. I recently had bypass surgery and Medicare and Medicaid helped me pay for it. Without Medicaid, I would not be able to afford the \$300 worth of drugs I must get each month because Medicare does not pay for my prescriptions. I would not be able to go to the doctor or to the psychologist that I must go to. With Medicaid, I am able to have more money in my pocket to help me pay for other things that I need, such as shelter and food. Medicaid has been very good to me for all of these reasons.”



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Some might think that individuals who apply for programs such as Medicaid or welfare are people who abuse the system when, for the most part, that is simply not true. Many of the individuals who use such programs are individuals who previously worked, who cannot work due to a disability, or are currently working but they need the program in order to obtain health care for themselves or their children.<sup>33</sup>

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### *Brittany, age 9 ~ Heyburn, Idaho*

“I like going to the doctor okay. The doctor makes me feel better when I am sick. She helps me out a lot so that I don’t get sick, too. She gives me medicine when I am sick. When I have a fever, she makes it go away. She does a lot of other stuff, too.”

### *Linda ~ Rupert, Idaho*

“My husband and I have three kids who use Medicaid. They have been using Medicaid since April 2000. Medicaid has been extremely beneficial to use because my kids get sick a lot. If we did not have Medicaid, we would not be able to take our children to the doctor when they need to because my husband is the only one who currently works. The legislature needs to keep Medicaid going — there are too many people in this state and in this country that simply cannot afford to go to the doctor or to get their medications. I would like to see the people who want to cut Medicaid go through a year without health insurance just so they know what it is like to be in our shoes. Medicaid helps us to take care of our children — we are very happy that Medicaid helps us when we need it.”

## *Gloria ~ Heyburn, Idaho*

“Medicaid has helped me get health care for the past 12 years. Several years ago, I was working really hard in order to make money for myself when I suddenly got really sick. I was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis. Because of that illness, I was told to go get Medicaid to help pay for my medical bills that I would obtain due to my illness. Without Medicaid helping me obtain the health care that I need, I could die or at the least, I would not be able to function. I would probably be in a wheelchair if it had not been for Medicaid. Medicaid is a good program because I would not be able to provide medical insurance for myself. I would not be able to get dental service or eyeglasses. So, I would not be able to see. For the past two months, I have been working part-time but that income is not enough for me to pay for the health care that I need. Because Medicaid helps me pay for my health care, I can use my income to help me eat and to have a place to live rather than to have to choose between eating and getting my medication. Medicaid is a good program for many people; it helps a lot of people who are elderly, disabled, or who are children to obtain the health care that they need.”

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“Limitations in mental health access affect people’s well-being and result in decreases in work performance, increased absenteeism, and increased use of medical services.”<sup>34</sup>

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“The costs for social welfare, administration, criminal justice, and family care given for untreated mental health needs are estimated at \$4 billion per year.” If these mental health needs were addressed during childhood and adolescence, they “could have been alleviated with timely and appropriate treatment and support services.” Children with untreated mental health needs “are at heightened risk for school failure and dropping out, drug use, behaviors heightening their risk for HIV/AIDS, and many other difficulties.”<sup>35</sup> “The potential impact of early intervention on instances of violence and the number of incarcerated juveniles and young adults is great.”<sup>36</sup>

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## *Cheryl ~ Boise, Idaho*

“For the past ten years, I have been using Medicaid as well as Medicare. I am diabetic and I have been diagnosed with schizophrenia. I currently take 14 pills a day for both conditions. With Medicaid paying for my health care and my prescriptions, I have not been in a mental hospital in the past nine or ten years. If I did not have Medicaid, I would have to be put in a mental hospital for life because I would have no way of controlling my schizophrenia without my prescriptions. My brother, who was also diagnosed with schizophrenia, used to be on Medicaid and while he was using it, he started to make sense and was able to hold a normal conversation since he was able to get the medications. Now that he no longer is able to use Medicaid, he does not make sense; he is off the wall. He is not able to hold a normal conversation anymore. For me, because I am on Medicaid, I feel great and I would not feel that way if I were not able to use Medicaid.”

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“Failing to monitor or effectively treat chronic illnesses such as hypertension or diabetes in uninsured adults can result in substantial morbidity and may increase the nation’s health care costs.”<sup>37</sup>

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## *Doni, age 10 ~ Lewiston, Idaho*

“I like going to the doctor because he makes me feel good when I am sick and he gives me medicine to make me feel better. But the medicine can be icky though. My doctor also makes me feel happy because when I don’t feel good, I am a little sad. He is really nice, too.”



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For a child, health care is critical. Children get the health care that they need because of Medicaid. Medicaid is important to children because it is “the most comprehensive and child-specific package of benefits”; it “offers a full range of medically necessary care for children, including children with special needs.”<sup>38</sup>

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Medicaid allows children to thrive to become adults who contribute greatly to this state and this country. “Investing in prevention for children will not only reap immediate benefits, but also will have lasting, positive effects on the health and well-being of the entire population and the nation’s economic productivity.”<sup>39</sup>

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Thus, “the Medicaid program is a critical health care safety net for millions of low-income children.”<sup>40</sup> It “brings poor children closer to the level of access experienced by nonpoor children with private insurance coverage.”<sup>41</sup>

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*Tabitha ~ Rupert, Idaho*

“Our two daughters currently use Medicaid. Medicaid has certainly helped my family — in fact, it enabled me to have a family. I would not have had my girls if Medicaid did not help pay for their births. Medicaid is good in that it enables couples to have children. I do not believe that Medicaid should help people to have a 12-person family, but it is wonderful that it helps couples to have at least one or two children who could not otherwise have done so. My husband and I currently work and we are trying to make a good life for our children by buying a manufactured home rather than renting a home. If we did not have Medicaid, we would have to pay for their health care rather than saving to buy a home. I would be really mad if the legislature cut Medicaid because it would only create more of a burden for us in trying to make a good life for our children. It would hurt too many people if their Medicaid benefits were cut.”

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Health insurance reduces stress for families because children are able to obtain the health care that they need.<sup>42</sup>

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“If states scrimp on providing the kinds of benefits that kids need, they may find that they spend more on treatment of acute conditions that could have been prevented.”<sup>43</sup>

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## *Guy ~ Kamiah, Idaho*

“For the past ten years, I have been using Medicaid after I was involved in an accident at the cedar mill. Before I had Medicaid, I was not able to go to the doctor due to the costs of health care. Now that I have Medicaid, I go to the doctor on a more regular basis. It has helped with my injury and with my general health. If the legislature cut my Medicaid benefits, I would have to go without going to the doctor because I would not be able to afford to go. Just recently I had surgery that I would not have been able to have without Medicaid. Medicaid has been real good to and for me.”

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When the government provides health insurance that allow individuals to receive preventative care, the government can save money in the long run by ensuring that the health of the individuals do not worsen or even occur in the first place. “Routine check-ups at the doctor’s office allow doctors to catch problems or diseases in the early stages, which would allow for the alleviation of the illness before it becomes a problem.”<sup>44</sup>

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The rescue ethic that this country has of helping people regardless of insurance coverage when they come into the emergency room is not working. “The sick get sicker...and the time and attention in hospitals is shifted from preventing disease to rescuing the refugees of our medical neglect.” This is causing health insurance costs to be raised and to become less comprehensive.<sup>45</sup>

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## *T.J., age 7 ~ Heyburn, Idaho*

“The doctor makes me feel good. I like the doctor because she makes my tummy hurt feel better. My tummy would stay hurt if I didn’t go the doctor. The doctor is nice because she helps me to feel better.”

*Priscilla ~ Lewiston, Idaho*

“I have been using Medicaid for at least four years because of my disability. Before I had Medicaid, I did not go to the doctor on a regular basis, which is probably why I ended up having to have surgery on my leg. I did not go to the doctor concerning my leg until it got so bad that I just had no other choice. The costs of health care were just too much. When I did go, the doctor told me that I would have to have knee replacement surgery. I then sought Medicaid so that I could have the surgery that I needed. Had it not been for Medicaid, I would not have been able to have the surgery. Medicaid has helped me very much and if I did not have it, I probably would not be able to go to the doctor now because of the high costs of health care. I am very thankful for Medicaid.”

*Marlon ~ Heyburn, Idaho*

“My two children and I both use Medicaid. I am currently unemployed because I have a disability. Before I injured my back, I was healthy and I was working and was able to pay for my own health insurance. But when I became injured, I was no longer able to work and I couldn’t afford the health insurance anymore. I only receive \$500 a month from SSI to live on. If I didn’t have Medicaid, I probably wouldn’t go because the cost of the health care, but I would try to make sure that the kids went. Medicaid pays for my children’s allergy shots, their eyeglasses, and my medical bills due to my disability. Because Medicaid helps my children, many others, and myself, who otherwise would not be able to go to the doctor, I back Medicaid 100 percent.”

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“Vision screening and eye examinations are crucial for the detection of conditions that distort children’s vision and can ultimately lead to blindness if not treated properly.”<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, “visual stimuli are critical to the development of normal vision, and decreased visual acuity may contribute to inadequate school performance and more serious eye problems. In addition, children are three times as likely as adults to have acute eye problems.”<sup>47</sup>

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### *Loretta, age 14 ~ Rupert, Idaho*

“I don’t like going to the doctor mainly because I don’t like the medicine that the doctor gives me and sometimes it hurts when the doctor gives me shots. But it is good that I am able to go to the doctor when I get sick because if I didn’t go to the doctor, I probably would get sicker. So I like going to the doctor then.”



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Furthermore, “uninsured children are more likely to be hospitalized for conditions that could have been treated through primary care. Uninsured children are less likely to be up to date with well-child care, less likely to have had all recommended immunizations, less likely to receive treatment for common childhood illnesses, and less likely to receive treatment even for a serious injury, a chronic illness, or special needs.”<sup>48</sup>

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### *Carolyn ~ Boise, Idaho*

“Before I started using Medicaid, my son was paying for my medical care. His income was not that great, so he had trouble paying for it because I have a disability. Before Medicaid, I was very, very sick and I nearly died. So I applied for Medicaid and for the past year I have been using Medicaid. Medicaid has been a lifesaver. I do not know what I would do without it. I would probably die like I almost died before when I was not using it. Since I have been on Medicaid, I have been feeling great.”

## Endnotes

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## *Organizations Releasing this Report*

The Northwest Federation of Community Organizations (NWFCO) is a regional federation of five state-wide, community-based social and economic justice organizations located in the states of Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington: Idaho Community Action Network (ICAN), Montana People's Action (MPA), Oregon Action (OA), Washington Citizen Action (WCA), and Coalition of Montanans Concerned with Disabilities (CMCD). Collectively, these organizations engage in community organizing and coalition building in 14 rural and major metropolitan areas, including the Northwest's largest cities (Seattle and Portland), and the largest cities in Montana and Idaho.

Idaho Community Action Network (ICAN) serves as a powerful, consolidated voice for Idaho's poor, with chapters and membership clusters in six Idaho communities, including the state's three largest cities and numerous rural towns. Through ICAN, low-income Idaho families have a voice in the decisions that impact their lives. In addition to its direct action work, ICAN runs a state-wide, volunteer-driven food program that helps low-income families supplement their monthly budgets. ICAN's community organizing model integrates the provision of food with training, leadership development and action on issues.

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