
The Coverage Gap and Law Enforcement

The Coverage Gap Makes Law Enforcement's Job Even Harder

Idaho's excellent law enforcement officers may not be experts in the details of health care financing, but they know that effective treatment of substance abuse or behavior disorders and depression can help prevent tragedies in our communities, such as the preventable deaths from car accidents, drug overdoses, suicide and homicides each year in Idaho. Passing the Healthy Idaho Plan and closing Idaho's coverage gap would provide thousands of people with the health care and treatment that could help avoid these deaths.

Early Mental Health Intervention Prevents Future Crime

42% of Catastrophic/Indigent program claimants in Idaho received mental health treatment. That indigent care is funded by local property taxes. With the Healthy Idaho Plan, more Idahoans could get the screening, diagnosis and effective treatment of mental illnesses or substance abuse problems, reducing the burden on law enforcement to address mental health issues in the community when there are bigger problems.

The Healthy Idaho Plan is Good for Kids and Families and Prevents Child Abuse

Under the Healthy Idaho Plan about 78,000 Idaho adults could afford health insurance instead of going without it as they do today. Not being able to get medical treatment causes stress in families, which affects Idaho kids. When parents can see a doctor regularly and get other treatment they need, they are able to be better moms and dads -- and when parents have insurance, kids are more likely to have it too.

Increasing health care coverage could provide parents with the treatment and support they and their family need, and in many cases reducing the sort of stress that may lead to child abuse and neglect. Getting regular medical care reduces kids' risk of trauma and developing behavioral issues themselves.

The Healthy Idaho Plan Saves the State and Counties Millions of Dollars

Today our state pays for the care of people lacking health insurance through local and state taxes that support county indigent funds and the state's Catastrophic Health Care Fund. This is an inefficient and expensive way to pay for health care. Under the Healthy Idaho Plan, the state and counties will save millions of dollars, and that money could be used for public investment in law enforcement, schools, roads and other building blocks of a strong economy.

It is much more cost effective to treat a mental illness or substance abuse problem before it becomes a crisis leading to involuntary commitment or incarceration. There are more people with mental illness in county jails than in psychiatric hospitals.

What is the Healthy Idaho Plan?

The Healthy Idaho Plan is a one-of-a-kind, homegrown solution to the coverage gap. The plan is based on the recommendation of a work group Governor Otter appointed to find a solution to the pressing issue of so many people lacking health insurance. With this public/private, or "hybrid" plan, Idahoans earning up to \$32,913 per year for a family of four will get help purchasing private coverage. A family of four making less than \$24,250 a year can get coverage through state-run care management. The program is funded by bringing our federal tax dollars back to Idaho. Income eligibility would vary by family size; the bottom line is that thousands of our friends and neighbors who can't get health insurance today would be covered -- making our state stronger and our people healthier.

Close the Gap Idaho is actively recruiting law enforcement allies. Please contact Christine at ctiddens@ccidaho.org today to get involved.

This piece was adapted from "Our Officers Make that Knock at the Door," Fight Crime, Invest in Kids, 2015. <http://www.fightcrime.org/wp-content/uploads/FCIK-UT-Medicaid.pdf>

