



THE AIDS INSTITUTE

Closing the Coverage Gap Will Help End the HIV Epidemic

Closing the health insurance coverage gap is a crucial step toward ending the HIV epidemic. In states that have not expanded Medicaid, 20% of people living with HIV are uninsured, compared to 6% in Medicaid expansion states.¹ Southern states – where 95% of the 2 million uninsured who stand to gain coverage by filling the coverage gap live – have become the epicenter of the HIV epidemic. In 2019, 53% of new HIV cases were diagnosed in southern states.² And although the South has 38% of the U.S. population, it was home to 45% of people living with HIV and 49% of deaths from HIV in the U.S.³ Closing the coverage gap in these states will not only improve access to health care for people living with and at risk for HIV, but also achieve the goal of ending the HIV epidemic nation-wide.

Who Can be Helped?

- As of 2019, an estimated 428,890 Americans were living with HIV across the states that have yet to expand Medicaid.⁴
- Data show that approximately 85,778 of those living with HIV in the 12 non-expansion states are uninsured and could be helped by closing the Medicaid coverage gap.⁵

How Will Closing the Coverage Gap Help End the HIV Epidemic?

Health insurance increases access to HIV prevention, as well as HIV testing and treatment. As a result, states that closed the health insurance coverage gap by expanding Medicaid have reduced rates of HIV transmission.⁶ With access to HIV treatment, people living with HIV can achieve undetectable viral loads, which makes it impossible for them to transmit HIV to others. Ending the HIV epidemic starts with access to health care.

Closing the Coverage Gap Promotes Health Equity

Improving access to health insurance coverage is a matter of health equity.

- Despite representing only one-third of the total population, 60% of people in the health insurance coverage gap are people of color.⁷
- People of color, who disproportionately live in the south, bear the greatest burden of the HIV epidemic: in 2019, 75% of people diagnosed with HIV were people of color.⁸
- Blacks and Hispanics living with HIV are three times as likely to be uninsured as their white counterparts.⁹
- And although 19% of the population in the South is Black, 50% of the people who were diagnosed with HIV in 2019 in the South were Black.¹⁰

Closing the health insurance coverage gap will help more people get health insurance, increasing access to HIV prevention, testing, and treatment; narrowing racial disparities within health coverage and health outcomes; and helping move the US closer to achieving the goal of ending the HIV epidemic.



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- ¹ Lindsey Dawson, Jennifer Kates, *Insurance Coverage and Viral Suppression Among People with HIV, 2018*, (Kaiser Family Foundation, September 24, 2021), <https://www.kff.org/hivaids/issue-brief/insurance-coverage-and-viral-suppression-among-people-with-hiv-2018/>
- ² US Department of Health & Human Services, *Ending the HIV Epidemic*, <https://www.hiv.gov/federal-response/ending-the-hiv-epidemic/overview>
- ³ AIDS VU.org, <https://aidsvu.org/resources/deeper-look-south/>; <https://aidsvu.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/06-Mortality.png>
- ⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, HIV Surveillance Report: Supplemental Report, Vol 26. Number 1, May 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pdf/library/reports/surveillance/cdc-hiv-surveillance-supplemental-report-vol-26-1.pdf>
- ⁵ Analysis conducted by The AIDS Institute using data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Kaiser Family Foundation
- ⁶ A. Hollingsworth, S. Raman, D. Sacks, and K. Wen, “Panel Paper: Does Providing Insurance Coverage Reduce the Spread of Infectious Disease? The Impact of Medicaid Expansions on HIV Diagnoses,” Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management 41st Annual Fall Research Conference, November 9, 2019, available at <https://appam.confex.com/appam/2019/webprogram/Paper31657.html>; E. Woodruff, “New HIV cases in Louisiana hit decade low in 2018; health officials hopeful for epidemic’s end,” NOLA.com, July 3, 2019, https://www.nola.com/news/healthcare_hospitals/article_4c7e9078-9dd0-11e9-8d81-cf4844533a8d.html
- ⁷ G. Lukens, B. Sharer, *Closing Medicaid Coverage Gap Would Help Diverse Group and Narrow Racial Disparities*, (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, June 14, 2021), <https://www.cbpp.org/research/health/closing-medicaid-coverage-gap-would-help-diverse-group-and-narrow-racial>
- ⁸ New HIV Diagnoses in the US and Dependent Areas by Race/Ethnicity, 2019, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/statistics.html>
- ⁹ L. Dawson, J. Kates *Insurance Coverage and Viral Suppression*
- ¹⁰ AIDS VU.org, <https://aidsvu.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/03-Race-2019.png>