



State Management of HCBS Waiver Waiting Lists

—
Medicaid and CHIP Payment and Access Commission

Tamara Huson & Kristal Vardaman

September 25, 2020

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Overview

- Medicaid coverage of home- and community-based services (HCBS)
- HCBS waivers
- Waiting list management
- Experiences of individuals on waiting lists
- Strategies to reduce or eliminate waiting lists
- Growing need for HCBS
- Policy considerations

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Medicaid Coverage of HCBS

- HCBS is not a mandatory benefit, but all Medicaid programs currently provide some HCBS benefits
- States can cover HCBS through state plan services or through waivers under Section 1915(c) and Section 1115 of the Social Security Act
 - State plan services are available to all enrollees
- Section 1915(c) and Section 1115 waivers are permitted to have waiting lists

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HCBS Waivers

- As of March 2020, there were:
 - 254 Section 1915(c) waivers operating in 47 states and the District of Columbia
 - 14 Section 1115 waivers operating in 14 states
 - Arizona, Rhode Island, and Vermont use Section 1115 as their sole HCBS authority

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Number of Section 1915(c) Waivers by Population Targeted, March 2020

Population targeted	Number of waivers
Age 65 and older	64
Autism	54
Brain injury	27
Developmental disability	86
Disabled (other)	27
Disabled (physical)	73
HIV/AIDS	8
Intellectual disability	91
Medically fragile	25
Mental illness	9
Serious emotional disturbance	9
Technology dependent	12

Source: MACPAC analysis of approved Section 1915(c) waivers, March 2020.

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Use of Waiting Lists under HCBS Waivers

- According to a Kaiser Family Foundation survey, in fiscal year 2018:
 - 41 states reported having an HCBS waiver waiting list for at least one population
 - total waiting list enrollment was 819,886
 - average wait time of 39 months
 - 33 of 41 states with waiting lists screen individuals for waiver eligibility before placement on a waiting list

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Waiting List Management

Waiting list management	Number of Section 1915(c) waivers	Number of Section 1115 waivers
First come, first served	62	2
Priority	46	4
Priority and wait time	21	0
No waiting list	59	2
No mention of waiting list	55	3
Unspecified	4	2
Other	7	1

Source: MACPAC analysis of available Section 1915(c) and Section 1115 waivers, March 2020.

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Experiences of Individuals on Waiting Lists

- It is difficult to measure unmet need and compare waiting lists across states
 - Not all states screen for eligibility before placing people on waiting lists
- Many individuals may be receiving some Medicaid services while waiting for waiver services
 - Tiered waivers
 - State plan services
 - Early and periodic screening, diagnostic, and treatment benefit
- Many individuals have natural supports, such as family caregivers, who provide care
- Some individuals may enter institutions or have supports available from other sources such as schools

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Strategies to Reduce or Eliminate Waiting Lists

- State funding and prioritization of HCBS by the governor or state legislature largely influence waiting list size
- Stakeholder views differed on whether state adoption of managed long-term services and supports affects waiting lists
- Some stakeholders spoke about the potential of making HCBS a mandatory benefit

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Growing Need for HCBS

- Many states are experiencing or anticipating a growing need for waiver services
 - Concerns about state capacity
 - Increasing demand for HCBS waiver services for children in some states
- Increasing lifespan and service intensity affect states' ability to meet the needs of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities
- Provider capacity can be a limiting factor

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Policy Considerations

- How can state efforts to rebalance be further encouraged and supported?
- Should there be fundamental changes in Medicaid long-term services and supports (LTSS) policies?
 - Make HCBS a mandatory Medicaid benefit?
 - Different policies for different subpopulations of LTSS users?

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