



Millions of Americans lost in the Medicaid purge

Featuring Loretta Alexander

SHOW NOTES

THIS TIME ON CODE WACK!

Now that COVID protections have ended, what does that mean for the millions of people getting booted off Medicaid in the country? Where does that leave our nation's most vulnerable, including children and people with chronic diseases or mental health issues?

To find out, we spoke to **Loretta Alexander**, health policy director of **Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families**. Ms. Alexander has over 40 years of experience in health care. This is the first episode in a two-part series with Loretta.

WE DISCUSS

For much of the COVID pandemic, there were protections in place that kept states from kicking people off Medicaid, the health insurance program for low-income individuals. How important were those health insurance protections for children and families?

"Oh, they were extremely important...

"If you could imagine needing ICU care with no Medicaid or no coverage, you know, that's not even fathomable to think that you would ever be able to pay that bill all the way off.

So [Medicaid] helped hospitals, it helped the people that needed Medicaid coverage. It helped the doctors' offices and the doctors that needed to make sure that all these sick people [who needed] care when COVID hit.

"People had to go to the doctor and they had to go to the hospitals. So it gave people a way to get their bills paid, and it gave the providers a way to get their bills paid too, because you're hiring new nurses, you're paying people more and more money. So it just helped overall to have that money available from Medicaid." – **Loretta Alexander**

In your state of Arkansas, isn't there a large percentage of children on Medicaid, like close to 60%?

"Absolutely, in Arkansas, we do have close to 60% of children on Medicaid and just recently in fact, a report came out from the Georgetown Center for Children and Families that shows that children in Arkansas, some counties have up to 74% of the children in those counties that are covered by Medicaid.

"And ... one school district had 98% of the children ... covered by Medicaid. In the rural areas there are not a lot of jobs. There are not a lot of opportunities to have higher incomes. So people fall into the income level to be eligible for

Medicaid. It may not be that they're not working, they just may not be making so much money that they're disqualified." – **Loretta Alexander**

How is the requirement to redetermine eligibility affecting Medicaid recipients, and the workers who have to process all the paperwork?

"...when you compress the time that the state agency workers have to get this work done, and then when you add to the fact that people that are just applying brand new that aren't in this situation, they just need Medicaid for the first time and they're applying, and those same same workers have to process all those cases.

"They have to process the redeterminations, they have to process the new applications, they have to process everything else that they have to do, and there's only a finite number of people. There's only a finite amount of time.

"So it complicates the whole process and the ultimate outcome is that people are losing coverage that probably are not ineligible. They're probably still eligible, they're just losing coverage..."

"We have received complaints from people that said, 'I did everything right, sent the information back in. I talked to somebody at the county office, but I still got a notice saying that my Medicaid was terminated.' We've got complaints from pregnant women saying, 'oh, I'm losing my coverage at the end of this. My baby is being born on this day and my coverage is ending on this day.'" – **Loretta Alexander**

Helpful Links

[Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families \(AACF\)](#)

[10 Things to Know About the Unwinding of the Medicaid Continuous Enrollment Provision](#), Kaiser Family Foundation

[Protecting Kids from Coverage Losses During Medicaid Redeterminations and Beyond: Five Strategies for States](#), *The Commonwealth Fund*

[Did Medicaid Expansion Ease COVID Suffering Among Low-Income Populations?](#), *American University, Washington DC*

[Medicaid eligibility and enrollment in Arkansas](#), *healthinsurance.org*

Episode Transcript

Read the full [episode transcript](#).

Biography: Loretta Alexander

Loretta Alexander joined [Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families](#) (AACF) as the Health Policy Director in 2018.

In addition to her internal policy work at AACF, she currently serves on the ACES Steering Committee, Arkansas Act 1220 Child Health Advisory Committee, Natural Wonders Partnership Council, Delta Dental Advocacy Advisory Workgroup, Arkansas Health Equity Collaboration, Arkansas Maternal Health Taskforce, and Excel By Eight Maternal Health Workgroup and Arkansas Birthing Project.

Ms. Alexander has over 40 years of experience in health care, including clinical services, program administration, program evaluation, health policy research and facility administration. Prior experience includes positions as research associate, traumatic brain injury program coordinator, director of a comprehensive child development research demonstration project and Medicaid consultant/coordinator for the Arkansas Governor's Indigent Healthcare Advisory Council.

Ms. Alexander received a Bachelor of Arts in Biology from Henderson State University and a Master of Health Services Administration from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. She completed a post graduate fellowship in hospital administration at the Aga Khan Hospital in Nairobi, Kenya.

Her community activities include Friends and Families of Care Facility Residents, Conway Human Development Center Parent Association, Global Ties Arkansas and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated.

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