



## Medicaid is Key to Current and Former Foster Youth

- Children in foster care often have complex health care needs given the circumstances and trauma surrounding their entry into the child welfare system.
- Medicaid coverage helps ensure that foster children receive the care they need, and it incentivizes permanency by protecting foster and adoptive families from the high cost of providing that care.
- A strong Missouri Medicaid program works to support foster children, foster and adoptive families, and sustains healthy communities.

### Medicaid is a critical source of health coverage for foster children and their families.

Each year over 20,000 Missouri children live in foster care, while nearly 22,000 reside in adoptive or guardianship care.<sup>i</sup> These children often have expensive health care needs and are particularly likely to experience behavioral health issues given exposure to trauma. This makes continuous, comprehensive access to health coverage especially important, as inconsistent health coverage could lead to delays in critical diagnoses and treatment.

### Children in foster care are more likely to have complex health needs. Compared to other children, they are:<sup>ii</sup>

- **2 times** as likely to have asthma and speech difficulties
- **3 times** as likely to have hearing and vision problems
  - **5 times** as likely to have anxiety
  - **7 times** as likely to have depression

### Medicaid provides comprehensive health coverage to nearly all foster children,<sup>iii</sup> including former foster youth up to age 26.

Medicaid provides continuous access to health coverage despite changes in living arrangements or primary caregiver. In addition, the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT) benefit is a mandatory Medicaid service<sup>iv</sup> that ensures that children enrolled in Medicaid have access to:

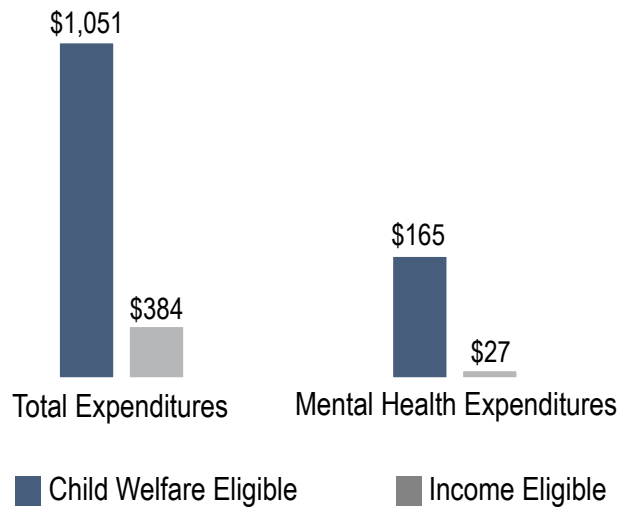
- Well checks and immunizations on a recommended schedule
- Comprehensive developmental assessments
- Vision, dental, and hearing services
- Behavioral health & trauma services such as therapy and/ or counseling, medication, and substance abuse treatment

**Medicaid coverage is a lifeline for many foster and adoptive families who otherwise could not afford the high cost of treatment for the children in their care.**

While children in the care of the Missouri Children’s Division account for fewer than one in thirteen children enrolled in Medicaid, their complex health care needs mean that these children account for 17% of overall Medicaid expenditures for children, and nearly one-third of spending on mental health services for children.

**Per Capita MO HealthNet Expenditures on Children:**

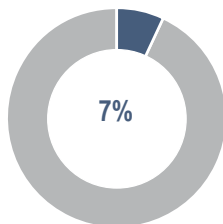
March 2020



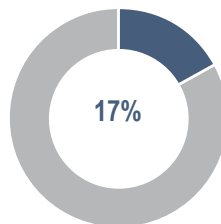
Source: DSS Monthly Management Report, March 2020

**Child Welfare Eligible Children as a Share of Medicaid Child Enrollment & Medicaid Expenditures on Children**  
March 2020

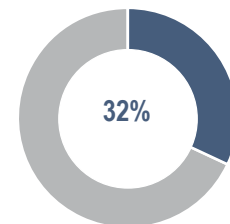
Enrollment



Total Expenditures



Mental Health Expenditures



**A strong Missouri Medicaid program can ensure children who have suffered child abuse and/or neglect can access the care they need and is one of the most effective ways to support foster and adoptive families.**

- i. Department of Social Services Children's Division Fiscal Year 2021 Budget Request
- ii. For more info on Medicaid eligibility in the child welfare system see Medicaid and CHIP Payment and Access Commission. (2015) The Intersection of Medicaid and Child Welfare. Available: <https://www.macpac.gov/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Intersection-of-Medicaid-and-Child-Welfare.pdf>.
- iii. Turney, K., & Wildeman, C. (2016). Mental and physical health of children in foster care. *Pediatrics*, 138(5).
- iv. Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2015). Health-Care Coverage for Youth in Foster Care—and After.