

How Citizens Can Help Shape Their State's Medicaid Program

A One-Page Guide



Each state has considerable flexibility to tailor its Medicaid program to fit its unique needs. Citizens can play an important role in shaping those programs. Here's how Medicaid advocacy works in Illinois:

State Plan - Each state has its own unique Medicaid State Plan outlining who is eligible and what services will be provided. Medicaid.gov offers a summary of our program on its [Illinois profile](#).

HFS - Every state has a designated agency that runs the Medicaid program; in Illinois it is the [Department of Healthcare and Family Services](#). Much of the program is administered via managed care [Care Coordination](#).

The MAC - The [Medicaid Advisory Committee](#) advises HFS on policy and planning, with subcommittees on public education, quality of care, health equity, and long-term care. Meetings are open to the public and [meeting schedules](#) and [minutes](#) are online. You can also ask to be added to a mailing list for meeting notices.

Waivers and State Plan Amendments - States can evolve and fine-tune their Medicaid programs by making permanent changes via State Plan Amendments (SPA) or by experimenting through five-year demonstration projects via Medicaid waivers. Our [one-pagers](#) summarize how these change mechanisms work.

Public Comment Periods - Any proposed change to the Medicaid program, whether via a waiver or SPA, requires a 30-day public comment period. In Illinois you can post comments by email or present testimony in person at HFS hearings. After input, and possibly revision, proposals are sent to CMS for approval; if CMS requests revisions, that triggers a further comment period. HFS posts [public notice](#) of the comment opportunities.

Legislative Committees – Medicaid funding and many policy changes come before the [Appropriations Medicaid](#) and [Human Services Medicaid](#) subcommittees in the House, and the [Appropriations I](#) and [Oversight of Medicaid Managed Care](#) committees of the Senate. It is always good to be in touch with your own elected representatives, as well as those on these committees, when following or advocating for legislation.

Advocacy Organizations – Effective work for change usually involves social justice organizations that keep abreast of the issues with both policy analysis and education efforts. In Illinois, [Shriver Center](#), [Access Living](#), [the AIDS Foundation](#), and the [Protect Our Care](#) coalition have been instrumental in working for beneficial Medicaid changes; the advocacy sections of their websites will have current information and how you can get involved.

This fact sheet highlights the touch points for Medicaid advocacy in Illinois. A similar or analogous process is in place in most states. A good starting point is your state's [Medicaid agency](#).

Bottom line: You can make a difference to how Medicaid works