

Montana Healthcare Programs MESSENGER

Stroke Awareness Month

May is Stroke Awareness Month! Strokes are a leading cause of death and adult disability in Montana. Luckily, many strokes can be prevented by addressing your risk factors. Stroke risk factors include:

- High blood pressure
- Diabetes
- Smoking
- Obesity
- High cholesterol
- Lack of exercise
- Heavy alcohol use
- Poorly controlled stress
- Atrial fibrillation – a heart rhythm that is often very fast and not regular

Treatment for stroke is time sensitive as brain cells die quickly when a stroke occurs. The most common and widely available treatment is using a clot-busting drug called – t-PA. t-PA must be given within 4.5 hours of when symptoms start, so spotting the signs and symptoms of a stroke and knowing what to do is very important. Stroke symptoms tend to happen suddenly and impact one side of the body. To help recognize and remember symptoms, remember the **BEFAST** acronym:

- **B**alance – sudden loss of balance or dizziness
- **E**yes – sudden blurred, double vision or loss of sight
- **F**ace – sudden drooping of your face
- **A**rm – sudden numbness or weakness in one arm
- **S**peech – sudden difficulty speaking or slurred speech
- **T**ime – Call 911 immediately

Strokes are a medical emergency and calling 911 leads to faster treatment which can save lives and reduce the risk of lasting disability. For more information, please visit:

<https://www.stroke.org/en/>

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Free Supplemental Food Packages for Low-Income, Age 60 and Above, Montana Residents

For low-income Montana residents who are age 60 and above, the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) provides a free monthly food package meant to supplement a senior's existing diet. This package contains a variety of foods with important nutrients for older adults including protein, calcium, iron, vitamins A, C, and D, and fiber. United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) foods in CSFP align with the Dietary Guideline for Americans and contain reduced amounts of sodium, saturated fat, and added sugar.

Eating healthy has benefits that can help older adults. As we age, healthy eating can make a difference in our health, help to improve how we feel, and encourage a sense of well-being.

CSFP offers a variety of American-grown USDA Foods that can fit into a healthy eating pattern for seniors:

- Canned and dried fruits – unsweetened or lightly sweetened
- Canned vegetables – low sodium or no salt added
- Low fat dairy – cheese and shelf stable milk
- Whole grains – oats, whole grain pasta, rice, and cereals
- Variety of proteins – beans, lean meats, poultry, and fish

These food packages are available through 12 CSFP participating local agencies across the state. CSFP programs have provided free supplemental food packages to seniors since the mid-1980s. Local participating CSFP agency staff and volunteers certify eligible seniors and assist them in receiving these food packages.

Find a participating CSFP agency at <https://dphhs.mt.gov/HCSDF/CSFP/index> or call 406- 444-1788

Information about USDA CSFP is available at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/csfp/commodity-supplemental-food-program>

Information about Montana's DPHHS CSFP program is available at <https://dphhs.mt.gov/HCSDF/CSFP/index>

DPHHS CSFP contact: Glade Roos glade.roos@mt.gov



Medicaid Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Question: What if I didn't apply for Medicaid?

Answer: Montana accepts a referral from the marketplace as an application for Medicaid.

This means if the information you entered seems to fit the Medicaid criteria, a referral is sent to Medicaid, and we may decide you are eligible. If you do not want to keep the Medicaid coverage active, contact the Office of Public Assistance.

Question: Can I have both Medicaid and a Marketplace coverage plan?

Answer: You can have both but there are some limitations.

If you have both, you are not able to receive advance payments of the premium tax credit or other cost savings for the Marketplace plan.

If you are eligible for Medicaid or Healthy Montana Kids (HMK), it counts as qualifying coverage and must be reported when shopping for marketplace coverage. HMK does not allow other creditable coverage so you will have to choose between HMK or Marketplace coverage.

Hepatitis C Oral Treatment Options

The development of a short-course, safe, well-tolerated oral treatment for hepatitis C is a remarkable milestone in the field of medicine. Treatment is recommended for all individuals with hepatitis C infection, including individuals with active substance use.

Treatment results in a cure in more than 95% of cases. Despite the availability of an effective cure, many people living with hepatitis C have not been treated. It is critical that treatment is available where people with hepatitis C receive other services, such as primary care offices.

Led by Montana medical providers, the Montana Hepatitis C and HIV Project ECHO, is designed for Montana medical providers to actively engage in a virtual community with their peers where they can share support, guidance, and feedback. Each session consists of a presentation led by a subject matter expert as well as an opportunity for providers to discuss de-identified cases and pose specific questions to specialists and clinical peers.

You can register for the Montana Hepatitis C and HIV Project ECHO and access recorded sessions at:

https://www.umt.edu/ccfwd/training/projectecho/hepc_echo.php

For more information, please contact: Kristi Aklestad,
kristi.aklestad@mt.gov

For individuals wanting more information about this treatment option or a prescription for this medication, contact your Medicaid primary care provider.



Medicaid FAQ Continued

Question: What happens if I have both?

Answer: You will get a notice from the Marketplace identifying the individuals that potentially have dual coverage.

The Marketplace will end any savings your household members are getting for their Marketplace coverage if you don't act in your Marketplace account by the date listed in your notice. If you choose to keep your full-cost Marketplace coverage, you should tell your state Medicaid agency you're still enrolled in Marketplace coverage.

If you choose to stay enrolled in Marketplace coverage without savings, you may no longer be eligible for HMK.

You should do one of these:

- End your enrollment in Marketplace coverage
- Update your application to tell the Marketplace you're not enrolled in Medicaid or HMK.

Question: Where can I get help?

Answer: To update your application details on the Marketplace, log into Healthcare.gov and select update application.

Regional Resource Specialists

Let's be real, trying to find the right mental health care for a child can seem about as tough as driving a mountain pass in a snowstorm. It's normal for families to run into twists, turns, and dead ends.

But they don't have to do it alone. Montanans can find help through two staff members with the Children's Mental Health Bureau who are happy to connect them to services.

"We're there to listen and problem solve," said Regional Resource Specialists Kelley Tippett and Trish Christensen.

Families on Medicaid, or their child's doctor, can contact Christensen and Tippett. When reaching out, they can expect to be asked about their child's mental health and family needs. Next, the specialists will share ideas, phone numbers, and/or a warm hand-off to service providers. Before calling, please have your child's Medicaid ID ready to share.

If a child needs more care outside of the state, a specialist will help plan for when they are ready to come home.

Specialists are assigned by county. Please see below.

Kelley Tippett: 406-444-2748, Fax 406-444-5913,
kelley.tippett@mt.gov

Blaine, Big Horn, Broadwater, Carbon, Cascade, Choteau, Fergus, Gallatin, Glacier, Golden Valley, Hill, Jefferson, Judith Basin, Lewis and Clark, Liberty, Madison, Meagher, Musselshell, Park, Petroleum, Phillips, Pondera, Roosevelt, Rosebud, Silver Bow, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Teton, Toole, and Wheatland

Trish Christensen: 406-329-1330, Fax 406-329-1332,
Trish.Christensen@mt.gov

Beaverhead, Carter, Custer, Daniels, Dawson, Deer Lodge, Fallon, Flathead, Garfield, Granite, Lake, Lincoln, McCone, Mineral, Missoula, Powder River, Powell, Prairie, Ravalli, Richland, Sanders, Sheridan, Treasure, Valley, Yellowstone, and Wibaux



Medicaid FAQ Continued

For additional Marketplace help, call the Marketplace Call Center at 1-800-318-2596 (TTY: 1-855-889-4325). The Call Center can also help with questions or if you're having trouble completing the steps.

You also have the option to make an appointment for in-person help. Find help near you at <https://www.healthcare.gov/find-local-help/>

If you want to close your Medicaid or HMK, or inform of other health coverage plans, contact the Public Assistance Helpline at 1-888-706-1535.

Digital Solutions for Better Community- Based Care

Do you know about Home and Community-Based Settings (HCBS)? They are places where individuals with disabilities and/or older adults live and spend their days. These include places like assisted living facilities, adult foster care or group homes. They are designed to provide person-centered care in the home and community to help people who need assistance with everyday tasks.

Arthritis: Awareness and Action in Montana

May is National Arthritis Awareness Month, a time to shed light on a condition that significantly impacts the lives of millions. While arthritis may not be a leading cause of mortality, it stands as the top cause of pain and disability, profoundly affecting daily routines and overall well-being.

What is Arthritis?

Arthritis is a condition that causes pain, swelling, and stiffness in and around one or more joints. There are over 100 types of arthritis that affect joint tissue around the joints, and other connective tissues. People of all ages, races, and genders live with arthritis. Arthritis is the leading cause of disability because the associated pain and limited joint function can severely hinder daily activities. In Montana, two out of five adults with arthritis report their condition affects their work productivity or even prevents them from working entirely.

Arthritis in Montana

In Montana, over one in four (28%) adults have been diagnosed with arthritis. This is higher than the national average of 25%.

Arthritis Management

Arthritis can be tough but here are some things that can be done to help manage arthritis symptoms to feel better.

- **Move Your Body:** Gentle exercises, such as walking, swimming, or cycling, can significantly reduce pain and improve joint function.
- **Talk to a Doctor:** If you think you or someone you know might have arthritis, it is important to see a doctor. They can provide a diagnosis and treatment options to help manage arthritis symptoms.
- **Maintain a Healthy Weight:** Eating healthy foods and keeping a healthy weight can help take stress off your joints.
- **Give Your Joints a Break:** Try changing positions and doing simple stretches throughout the day to avoid stiff joints.

Arthritis Management Classes

The Department of Public Health & Human Services (DPHHS) supports classes designed to help manage arthritis:

- Stay Active & Independent for Life (SAIL)
- Tai Chi for Arthritis & Falls Prevention
- Walk with Ease

If you want to learn more about these helpful programs, please visit the Montana Arthritis Program website at:

<https://dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/arthritis> or call 1-844-684-5848.

Digital Solutions for Better Community-Based Care Continued

The HCBS Settings Rule was introduced by the federal government to ensure individuals with disabilities can fully participate in community living. Because of this rule, settings must meet specific guidelines to receive Medicaid funding. Our focus is on reviewing settings to ensure they meet these federal requirements. This means looking at how well each setting supports the rights, preferences, and independence of people. Settings need to be consistent to ensure the member's autonomy and lifestyle remain intact.

Several waiver programs have partnered to create the Settings Evaluation Tracking System (SETS) to make sure Montana follows this rule to support members. These include the Big Sky Waiver (BSW), Developmental Disabilities (DD) Waiver, and Severe Disabling Mental Illness (SDMI) Waiver.

The SETS platform supports the federal HCBS Settings Rule by providing a digital solution for compliance. SETS includes portals for administration, providers, and public feedback. Find more information about the HCBS Setting requirements and SETS on the [HCBS website](#).

Pediatric Complex Care Assistant Services Coming Soon!

Pediatric Complex Care Assistant (PCCA) services support Medicaid members aged 20 and under with medically complex needs by compensating family caregivers for specialized care. Established under 37-2-603, MCA, in response to House Bill 449 (2023), these services fill care gaps without replacing existing programs and are expected to be effective July 1, 2025. PCCA services a new benefit available to qualifying Medicaid members.

PCCAs do not replace:

- Private Duty Nursing (PDN) services.
- Health Maintenance Activities available under Montana's Community First Choice Services (CFCS)/Personal Care Services (PCS) Self-Direct Programs.
- Home Health Services.

Qualifying for PCCA Services:

- Be under the age of 21 years.
- Have a parent, guardian, other family member, kinship care, or foster care provider who elects to participate as a PCCA.
- Be eligible for Medicaid and meet the medical necessity requirements.
- Have a documented pediatric complex care need.
- Have a physician-ordered pediatric complex care assistant service and services prior authorized.
- Require pediatric complex care services that a PCCA can provide under the PCCA Medicaid-approved services.
- PCCA services must not duplicate other services the member is receiving; however, PCCA, Personal Care Assistant (PCA), and PDN services can all be included in a single person-centered service plan.

PCCAs may perform the following functions:

- Medication Administration.
- Tracheostomy Care: Routine care, suctioning, emergency ventilation, and tube replacement.
- Enteral Care & Therapy.
- Airway Clearance: Includes oral suction and device setup/cleaning.
- Additional Tasks: Ostomy, central line, IV fluid, and oxygen management (including CPAP/BIPAP/ventilator support), per regulatory rules.

Steps for Families to Qualify as PCCAs:

- Complete the required training and comprehension program.
- Obtain licensure from the Montana Department of Labor and Industry.
- Secure a medical order for PCCA services from the primary healthcare provider.
- Ensure PCCA services are prior authorized through the PCCA service provider.
- Be hired as a PCCA by the authorized PCCA service provider agency.

Licensure:

To become licensed as a PCCA through the Montana Department of Labor (DLI), applicants must complete the DLI online application, submit the DLI Attestation form for the Montana PCCA Program, and pay the \$25 annual licensing fee. This process is outlined under 37-2-603, MCA, and administrative rules 24.160.501 and 24.160.505, ARM.

An applicant for licensure must have:

- Completed a training program approved by the DLI and received a valid certificate from the training program; and/or
- Passed a hands-on examination approved by the DLI that demonstrates the applicant's competence.

You can access the online application at boards.bsd.dli.mt.gov/pediatric-complex-care-assistant-program/

Applicants are directed to create an account at aca-prod.accela.com/POL/Default.aspx

Tentative dates for online training for families and those interested in becoming a licensed PCCA are June 9 from 12 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. and then offered again on June 12 from 5:15 p.m. to 6:45 p.m.

Contacts:

- Denise Brunett, Bureau Chief Community Services Bureau
406-444-4544
Denise.Brunett2@mt.gov
- Michelle Christensen, Section Supervisor CFCS/PCS/MFP
406-270-4211
Mchristensen@mt.gov

Key Contacts

Montana Health Care Programs/Medicaid/HMK *Plus* Member Help Line

For questions regarding benefits or Passport to Health:

1-800-362-8312

MT Health Care Programs**Montana Relay Service**

For the deaf or hard of hearing:

1-800-253-4091 or 711

Montana Public Assistance Help Line

For eligibility questions:

1-888-706-1535

MT PUBLIC ASSISTANCE**Transportation Center**

For questions regarding travel or approval:

1-800-292-7114.

Call before you travel, or you may not be reimbursed.