



## The Justice & Health Collaborative

Maximizing Healthcare Reform Opportunities for Justice Systems

### Steps to Maximize Healthcare Reform for Justice Systems — Enrolling Newly-Eligible Participants (Corrections Systems)

*As millions of Americans become eligible for health insurance on January 1, 2014, corrections systems have an unprecedented opportunity to help people enroll in health insurance and link them with appropriate services in the community. Beginning in 2014, millions of low-income adults will qualify for coverage, including some people leaving correctional facilities. Currently many people under justice supervision do not have access to private insurance or Medicaid, but have significant unmet health needs, including mental health and substance use disorder (MH/SUD) treatment needs. A high proportion of these people will be eligible for insurance and will have coverage for MH/SUD services, as required by the law.*

*Many corrections systems already refer people to medical, MH, and SUD services when they are released. Supporting applications for enrollment prior to release allows the corrections system to reach the large numbers of persons who will benefit from expanded access to both primary and behavioral health care upon release. This can lead to significant increases in public safety and health.*

*In order to maximize the opportunities presented by healthcare reform, it is crucial that corrections leadership work with your State's Medicaid authority and other key organizations.*

#### COLLABORATION AND PLANNING

**Find out what your State's process will be for enrolling people in insurance through expanded Medicaid eligibility and the Health Insurance Marketplaces.**

Work with State/county Medicaid agencies and your Health Insurance Marketplace to learn how justice-involved individuals can apply for health coverage prior to release from jail and when under justice supervision in the community.

**Determine which correctional staff can assist with applications for enrollment, and how medical and correctional staff will link people to care upon release.**

Develop a focused action plan to maximize enrollment and increase linkage to health care, including MH/SUD care, upon release.

**Determine how parole agents will assist people under their supervision with enrollment.** People already under community supervision can apply through the same processes available to all eligible people. Documentation such as driver's license, State ID, or Social Security number may be needed. Parolees may require assistance in obtaining them.

**Formalize agreements with your State Medicaid agency, State Health Insurance Marketplace Board, and community care providers.** A written agreement such as a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) can help to assign roles and responsibilities to ensure that eligible inmates and those supervised in the community are enrolled in appropriate coverage.

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**The Justice & Health Collaborative is a joint project of:**

The Center for Health and Justice at TASC —  
<http://www2.centerforhealthandjustice.org>

The Legal Action Center — <http://www.lac.org>

Advocates for Human Potential — <http://www.ahpnet.com>

## KEYS TO ENROLLMENT

**Time the application and enrollment process to coincide with transition planning.** Implement procedures that facilitate timely enrollment for individuals with varying lengths of contact with the justice system including those who were previously enrolled. Work with your State Medicaid agency or Health Insurance Marketplace to understand your State's policies and practices on suspending benefits during incarceration. Timely processes can ensure continuity of care upon release and avoid gaps in medication as well as the need for some inmates to reenroll if previously enrolled.

**Make the prerelease application process as effective and efficient as possible to reduce staff time and save money.** Improve efficiency by adjusting the application process to take advantage of information available through the justice system such as verification of identity. Effective systems design includes a quality assurance process to ensure that applications are filled out correctly. Conduct reviews to determine the percentage of successful applications and adjust training and written materials to improve the percentage.

**Utilize technology to support enrollment and inter-agency collaboration.** Although updating and integrating technology requires a financial investment, the benefits of data links among the State Medicaid agency, State social service agencies, and the criminal justice system can expedite and simplify enrollment by cross-matching with other automated systems. Leveraging existing information saves money by reducing staff time, and makes systems faster and more accurate.

## EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

**Educate and train correctional personnel and parole officers to have conversations about access to health insurance and primary and behavioral health care.** These professionals can benefit from brief informative training about changes in insurance eligibility. Training can encourage and facilitate insurance applications with the goal of reducing problems related to mental health and substance use disorders through increased access to health care and treatment, which may reduce recidivism.

**Provide education, counseling, and promotional materials that emphasize the importance of health care coverage for successful reentry and good health.** Advocacy efforts, including the use of print, online materials, and social media, can reach potential enrollees, their family members, and key community stakeholders such as hospital emergency departments, and substance use disorder and mental health treatment providers. Use brief messages to highlight where and how to apply, what support services are available, and how to get more information.

## SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES

**Contribute to the work of other corrections systems by sharing the successes you have had with enrollment.** Document your processes, your barriers, and your successes so you can share them. Other systems can benefit greatly from your good work and leadership during the exciting time of change.

