# AMPLIFYING UNHEARD VOICES OF THE MEDICAID COMMUNITY: PEOPLE OF COLOR, WITH DISABILITIES, AND LGBTQ+

# S E N S I S

### SEPTEMBER 2021

# Black/African Americans who are Medicaid Eligible or Enrolled

- Among Black or African American Medicaid eligible or enrolled individuals (MEEs), there is an interest in the Medicaid program helping with social isolation and mental health issues. 56% of Black or African American MEEs surveyed report concerns about being lonely or away from family/friends, with 40% of Black or African American MEEs recommending home visits and wellness checks as the best way for the Medicaid program to offer aid with loneliness.
- 56% of Black or African American MEEs surveyed report an interest in the Medicaid program helping with issues beyond health.
- When going through the Medicaid application journey, Black or African American MEEs rely on trusted information sources to learn about the program. 29% of Black or African American MEEs surveyed report speaking to a family member and 27% visit a Medicaid or social services office in-person to learn more about the Medicaid program.
- Alternatively, Black or African American MEEs report lower reliance on general online searches, such as Google or Bing, to learn about Medicaid, with 19% using this method to find program information.

"It's their certification period that can be very, very frustrating and overwhelming...they give you a short window of time to submit whatever the requirements are. And a lot of times in my experiences, I lose coverage for, let's say, just a small amount of time because things haven't been submitted correctly, or it's just like the waiting game."

- Black/African American, CT

### Solutions & Recommendations:

- Fund Enrollment Assisters to connect Medicaid patients to care
- Increase investment in non-English language assistance and resources

Recommendation: Collect and report comprehensive data from health plans and state and federal agencies to help reduce disparities in Medicaid access

- Merge SNAP benefits and Medicaid application into dual-qualification
- Connect Medicaid program beneficiaries to healthy food organizations and resources
- Expand in-community peer-to-peer support and care services

**Recommendation:** Close the Medicaid coverage gap

. Decentralized

- Drive enrollment and renewal through multiple channels
  - Consider auto enrollment and simplifying the enrollment process for Medicaid
  - Rethink the renewal process and redesign the methods of notification

Recommendation: Conduct further research on the impact of language and identity in recruiting of unacculturated and LGBTQ+ communities

Acquiring a
Social Health
Beyond the
Doctor's
Office

Documents
and Complex
Application
Requirements

Inconsistent
Access to Care
and Quality
Providers

**Extensive** 

- Incentivize physicians to accept telehealth appointments for Medicaid enrollees.
- Encourage and incentivize MCOs to cultivate a more robust, diverse, culturally-competent and stable health care workforce

Recommendation: Continue study into the unique user journeys of Medicaid eligibles and enrollees of color, persons with disabilities, and LGBTQ+

# **Pain Points Among all Surveyed Populations**

# Searching for Information

- Medicaid eligibles and enrollees (MEEs) learn about Medicaid from a variety of sources because of the lack of a central, comprehensive source for information.
- When searching for initial information about the Medicaid program, 70% of MEEs have not visited the official Medicaid website and 27% of respondents find searching for Medicaid applications, resources, or information on the internet difficult.

# **Understanding Enrollment and Renewal**

 39% of Medicaid eligibles find the overall process of applying to Medicaid to be difficult, compared to 26% of Medicaid enrollees.

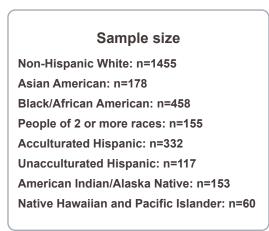
# **Examining Delivery and Care**

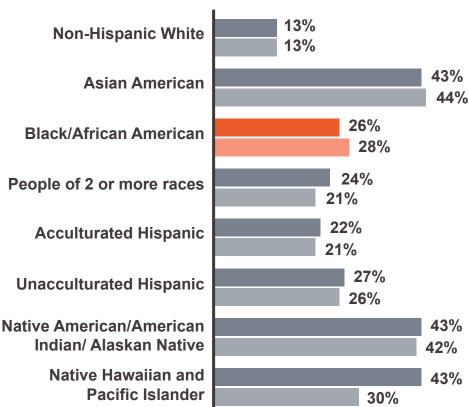
Nearly a quarter of respondents report a negative experience finding a provider who accepts Medicaid (24%). Medicaid enrollees say their options are limited because many doctor's offices do not accept Medicaid, and the clinics that do accept Medicaid insurance are not in locations accessible to their communities.

# **Rethinking Social Needs**

- MEEs desire Medicaid program assistance accessing affordable, nutritious foods. Over half (54%) of MEEs surveyed have experienced concerns about having enough food, with 78% being "somewhat interested" in the Medicaid program helping them get nutritious food.
- MEEs struggle with costs associated with housing rather than finding housing. 61% say it would be helpful for the program to offer assistance in the form of cash payments to help with utility bills and rent payments (59%).
- Social isolation and loneliness are the most commonly experienced social need among MEEs. 62% surveyed say they, or their families, have been concerned about being lonely and away from friends at some point.







SENSIS

Related Resources: sensishealth.com/rwjf

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The views here do not necessarily reflect the views of the foundation.

About the Research

This study gathered the opinions and experiences of 3,080 Mediciad eligible and enrolled people of color, individuals with disabilities, and LGBTQ+ across age and gender groups. Feedback on this research was provided by a 12-member Policy Advisory Group comprised of experts across Medicaid, advocacy, and policy.