

Health Care

Individuals experiencing homelessness disproportionately suffer from mental illness and physical disability. All too often, the emergency room is the default option for receiving medical care. Michigan's expansion of access to health insurance through the Affordable Care Act meant that more homeless individuals had the opportunity to enroll in life-saving health insurance. Federal attempts to repeal the Affordable Care Act or cut funding for health services would cause unnecessary hardships for these individuals.

- Michigan expanded its Medicaid program in 2014, and between 2013-2015 we saw a 51% increase in enrollment just among those who reported being homeless. While we can't directly credit this increase to the Affordable Care Act, we do find a compelling correlation.
- Nationally, the expense to care for individuals experiencing homelessness through emergency medical services is much higher than caring for housed individuals. Homeless individuals are often considered 'super-utilizers' of emergency services and spend an average of four days longer per hospital visit than comparable housed individuals, resulting in thousands of dollars in extra care costs.¹
- Seeking preventative care is difficult for homeless individuals who are uninsured, leading to more emergency room and hospital visits. In 2015, 7,326 homeless individuals had more than 25,025 ER visits in Michigan.
- Michigan's homeless veterans report a much higher rate of disability than the general public experiencing homelessness: 65% for veterans compared to 37% for civilians.
- In 2015, 56% of single homeless adults in Michigan had a mental health condition.
- The aging population is the largest rising subpopulation of homeless individuals in Michigan (a 9% increase between 2014-2015) with 68% of homeless seniors reporting a documented disability in 2015.

How you can help

- **Be an advocate for the Affordable Care Act. It is the best means for making sure homeless individuals in Michigan maintain health insurance.**
- **Be prepared to supplement health insurance costs with state funding if Congress repeals the ACA without a safety net for the most vulnerable enrollees, such as homeless individuals.**
- **Support additional means for providing quality care for homeless individuals who have mental or physical disabilities.**

Contact

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Sources

¹ Salit S.A., Kuhn E.M., Hartz A.J., Vu J.M., Mosso A.L. Hospitalization costs associated with homelessness in New York City. *New England Journal of Medicine* 1998; 338: 1734-1740.