Healthy Connections Community Engagement Initiative

FACT SHEET

What is the Healthy Connections Community Engagement Initiative?
The Healthy Connections Community Engagement Initiative is a public health initiative. Its purpose is to use a tailored approach to promote better health outcomes and financial independence by providing access to resources to the most vulnerable South Carolinians while incentivizing able-bodied South Carolinians to achieve self-sustainability.

The initiative includes the Healthy Connections Works waiver and the Palmetto Pathways to Independence waiver, both of which were approved by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Through the Healthy Connections Works waiver, the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (SCDHHS) will adopt community engagement requirements for qualifying Medicaid members. A list of qualifying community engagement activities is available on the second page of this fact sheet. The Palmetto Pathways to Independence waiver will provide additional coverage to some of the state’s most vulnerable populations. The initiative also provides a pathway for parents, caretakers and relatives of dependent children whose household income is below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) to receive Medicaid coverage.

How does this impact Medicaid applicants/members?
No action is required by current Medicaid members at this time. SCDHHS will provide updates on reporting requirement timelines for those who are impacted by community engagement requirements and coverage implementation dates for those who will be made eligible through this initiative as it implements the waivers.

What are some benefits of the Healthy Connections Community Engagement Initiative?
The Healthy Connections Community Engagement Initiative takes a tailored approach to achieving better health outcomes by providing coverage to more of the most vulnerable South Carolinians while also promoting financial independence. The initiative:

• Leverages the statewide network of job seeking, training, education and charitable resources to help get South Carolinians engaged in their communities by finding a job, continuing their education, learning a job skill or serving their community;

• Removes the disincentive to earn more money many Medicaid members face by increasing the income threshold for parents, caretakers and relatives of dependent children from 67% of FPL to 100% of FPL. Parents, caretakers and relatives of dependent children aren’t eligible to purchase subsidized health care coverage on the federal exchange until they reach or exceed 100% of FPL. By closing this gap, this initiative makes it easier for Medicaid members to achieve self-sustainability;

• Introduces new resources to combat the ongoing opioid crisis by providing coverage for medically necessary addiction treatment services to those with income below the FPL;

• Improves fetal and maternal health outcomes by providing coverage to women who are pregnant or up to 12-months postpartum who have been diagnosed with substance use disorder (SUD), serious mental illness (SMI), or both, and have income less than 194% of FPL;

• Supports family reunification by extending coverage to parents of foster children who are not otherwise eligible for full Medicaid coverage, who have not had their parental rights terminated, are completing or complying with a SUD treatment program as part of a family reunification plan and have income less than 133% of FPL; and,

• Promotes healthier communities and financial independence by providing coverage to those not otherwise eligible for full coverage Medicaid with no dependent children who are chronically homeless; or, involved in the criminal justice system and in need of SUD treatment.
Who will be impacted by the Healthy Connections Community Engagement Initiative?

Full-benefit, non-disabled adults, ages 19 to 64, enrolled in the Medicaid program or made eligible through the Palmetto Pathways to Independence waiver, and who do not have a qualified exemption, must meet the community engagement requirements at the time of implementation.

Those who have a qualifying exemption and are not required to participate in community engagement activities include:

- Children enrolled in Medicaid or CHIP;
- Members of federally recognized tribal organizations;
- Pregnant women and Medicaid members who are 365 days or less postpartum;
- Disabled individuals, including individuals who have a medical condition that would prevent them from participation in this project;
- Individuals 65 or older;
- Individuals who are the primary caregiver of a child or someone who is disabled;
- Individuals receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI);
- Individuals participating in a Medicaid covered treatment program for alcohol or substance abuse addiction, including opioid addiction;
- Individuals compliant or exempt from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) requirements related to employment;
- Individuals who are determined by SCDHHS to be exempt on a case-specific basis. This includes certain individuals with medically complex conditions that require multidisciplinary specialized care or would otherwise be precluded from employment or community engagement activities due to their health status; and,
- Members residing in regional areas that experience an unemployment rate of 8% or greater or when the statewide unemployment rate is 8% or greater.

What activities fulfill the requirements of the Healthy Connections Community Engagement Initiative?

Examples of qualifying activities for the community engagement initiative include:

- Participation in an adult secondary education program through a public-school district or technical college;
- At least half-time (as defined by the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education) participation in a degree or certificate-seeking program in an accredited institution of higher education;
- Compliance with unemployment insurance (UI) work-search requirements (first 16 weeks of UI benefits);
- For dual Medicaid-SNAP/TANF beneficiaries, demonstrated compliance with SNAP community engagement standards. Employment for an average of at least 80 hours per month over a three-month period; or,
- Volunteering for at least 80 hours per month over a three-month period with a qualified public entity or qualified charitable organization.

Where can I find opportunities to engage in my community?

SCDHHS is partnering with other state agencies, non-profits and the private sector to help South Carolinians achieve self-sustainability, continue their education, learn a job skill and/or serve their community. Resources on how to find community engagement opportunities are available online at scdhhs.gov/cew/resources.