

TennCare

In 1994 TennCare replaced Tennessee's Medicaid program with a managed care system designed to save dollars and cover more lives than Medicaid.

Despite many criticisms, the TennCare program has provided health care to Medicaid-eligible children and adults and uninsured and uninsurable Tennesseans. The Medicaid-eligible group consists of some of the poorest children and families in the state.

In addition to covering individuals who would not have health care services without TennCare, the state has saved billions of dollars since 1994. An analysis by the Comptroller of the Treasury found that the TennCare program cumulatively saved the state more than \$2 billion in state tax dollars. The comptroller compared Medicaid spending growth for TennCare to Southern Legislative Conference (SLC) states for 1993 through 2001. This analysis compared state TennCare expenditures with what the state would have spent if TennCare expenditures had grown at the same rate as in the SLC states (Comptroller of the Treasury, 2001).

TennCare can be linked to:

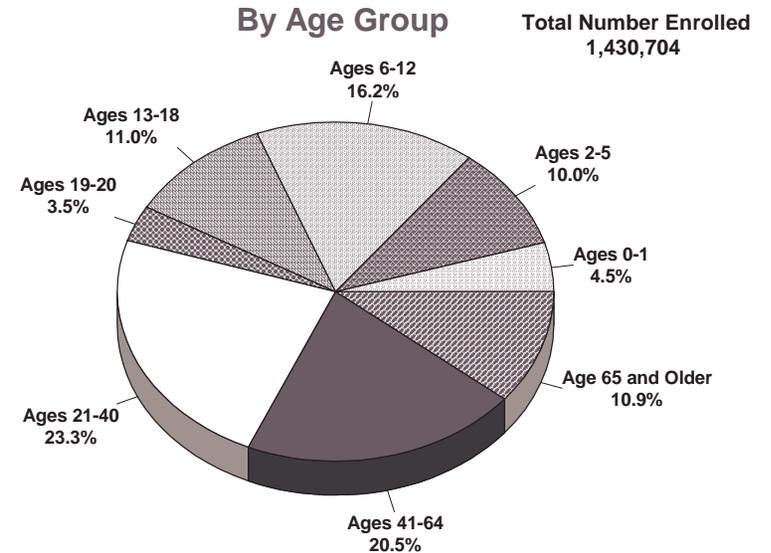
- Improved health indicators for children, including prenatal care, infant mortality, child death, and immunizations;
- Early detection of physical and developmental disabilities through the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) requirements;
- Improved dental care and treatment; and,
- Early detection and intervention of mental-health problems.

According to the Children's Defense Fund, health-care coverage is vitally important for ensuring that every child has a healthy start. Children need to feel well, see well, and hear well in order to do well in school. Yet, uninsured children are far less likely to receive medical and dental care when they need it. Compared with insured children, they are:

- More than four times as likely to have an unmet medical need;
- Three times as likely to have an unmet dental need;
- More than three times as likely to go without prescription medication; and,
- Almost twice as likely to have an unmet need for vision care (Children's Defense Fund, 2000).

Uninsured children are at risk of preventable illness. The majority of uninsured children with asthma and one in three uninsured children with recurring ear infections do not see the doctor during the year. Many end up hospitalized for acute asthma attacks that could have been prevented or suffer permanent hearing loss from untreated ear infections.

TennCare Enrollees as of December 2000



Source: Bureau of TennCare. *Includes out-of-state enrollees.