

Restore enhanced pediatric primary care rates

Washington's Medicaid reimbursement for primary care ranks 47th in the nation. This has significant consequences for children and families. Two in five children in Washington state are insured on Medicaid. Clinics dedicated to kids insured on Medicaid often face financial losses or threatened viability because the program reimburses at rates far lower than commercial insurers or Medicare. As a result, many clinics limit the number of Medicaid patients they can see—or stop accepting Medicaid patients altogether.

For Medicaid patients, this creates barriers to accessing care. Medicaid patients struggle to find providers who accept their insurance, leading to delays in appointments, untreated medical conditions, and worsening health conditions. The gap between patient need and provider capacity continues to grow, leaving some Washington communities underserved.

Simply put, **the current system is unsustainable.**

In 2021, the Washington state legislature made a commitment to fix this problem for kids, instituting Medicaid: Medicare parity in pediatric primary care and 15% increases in reimbursement rates for specialty pediatric care. However, in July 2024, these gains faced setbacks when reimbursement rates dropped an average of 4% for some of the most common pediatric primary care codes and 1% for inpatient. Notably, certain newborn codes experienced an even steeper reduction of 5%.

This reduction could once again make it challenging for children and teens insured through Apple Health to access primary care close to home and further straining an already limited network of providers.

Low reimbursement rates for Medicaid is also a critical health equity issue, disproportionately impacting communities of color, children, and families. According to [2024 data from the Kaiser Family Foundation](#):

- Two in five children in Washington are covered by Medicaid.
- Nearly half (49%) of Medicaid recipients in Washington identify as non-white.
- Medicaid supports about 33% of births in Washington state.

The Ask

Restore pediatric primary care rates to the 2021 enhanced pediatric rates. This will ensure all young people in Washington state have equitable access to the timely, high-quality care they need to thrive.

Contacts: Amber Ulvenes | amber@ulvenesconsulting.com | 360-280-0384
Sarah Rafton | srafton@wcaap.org | 206-293-3540