

Medicaid Workforce Tracker: Identifying the Workforce Serving Medicaid Populations

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ISSUE: Medicaid participation - whether and how much healthcare providers accept Medicaid patients - is a critical determinant of healthcare access for individuals with Medicaid. However, healthcare providers are less likely to accept patients with Medicaid. Previous studies have found between 10 and 30% of primary care providers do not accept new Medicaid patients and even when providers participated, Medicaid patients often made up a small share of their patient panels. Studies of Medicaid participation have often been limited by methods and available data. Methods have ranged from using Medicaid provider directories, provider surveys, “secret shopper” type studies, and claims data. Medicaid Provider Directories are lists of Medicaid enrolled providers. However, enrolled status does not guarantee providers are accepting new Medicaid patients or providing service. Provider surveys are another frequently used method. Surveys are limited by sample size and response rates, which limit smaller service area analysis. Surveys may be further limited by reporting bias as Medicaid participation may be recognized as a socially desirable response. Secret shopper studies provide a snapshot of Medicaid acceptance but are resource intensive and limited in scope to whether practices are accepting new patients at the time of the study and are often limited in geography. In this study, we utilize newly available national Medicaid claims data to examine Medicaid service by number of beneficiaries served, comparing across states and across specialties and professions.

METHODS: We used the 2016 Transformed Medicaid Statistical Information (T-MSIS) Other Service (OT) and Pharmacy (RX) files to identify unique primary care providers by the number of Medicaid patients served (zero, 1-100, and more than 100 Medicaid beneficiaries) and calculated: 1) the percent of primary care providers in the state by number of Medicaid patients; and 2) the density of Medicaid providers per Medicaid population. The total number of primary care providers in a state is aggregated from the NPPES (January 2017). State Medicaid populations are from the Kaiser Family Foundation December 2016 counts. We limited our analysis to 31 states with low concern data quality in the RX data file (as assessed by CMS in the DQ Atlas).

FINDINGS: In the 31 states with the highest data quality, the percent of primary care providers who saw no Medicaid patients ranged from 12% to 30%. The percent of high volume (serving more than 100 Medicaid patients) primary care providers ranged from 22% to 56%. The density of Medicaid primary care providers serving more than 11 Medicaid patients ranged from 35.5 primary care providers per 10,000 Medicaid population to 146.5. Medicaid participation varied across primary care specialties, with pediatricians most likely to participate and provide service to higher numbers of Medicaid patients across states.

DISCUSSION: Better understanding for the Medicaid primary care workforce will support targeted efforts to improve Medicaid participation and access.

Key Words: Primary care, Medicaid participation