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How **Expanding Access to Medicaid** Helps North Carolina Address Substance Use Disorders and the Opioid Crisis

Medicaid has been noted as one of the most effective tools in health coverage policy to combat crises linked to substance use disorders (SUD) and the opioid epidemic.¹ North Carolina has one of the highest rates of drug-related deaths in the nation and, what's more, four cities in the state are ranked in the top 20 for opioid use.

In addition to the opioid crisis there is an ongoing, unmet need for treatment and services for individuals with other SUD concerns and behavioral health disorders. Expanding Medicaid access is one proven way to strengthen North Carolina's approach to address SUD and the opioid epidemic's treatment needs.

The following are **talking points for showing the benefits of closing the coverage gap** for North Carolinians that need treatment for SUD and opioid use.

North Carolina's Opioid and Substance Use Disorder Crisis

- Drug overdoses are killing twice as many North Carolinians as murders.²
- There are nearly 16 drug-related deaths for every 100,000 people in North Carolina.³
- Four of North Carolina's cities rank among the top-20 for the highest rates of opioid abuse across the U.S. (Wilmington, Fayetteville, Hickory, and Jacksonville).⁴

How Can Expanding Access to Medicaid Help North Carolina's Opioid and SUD Concerns?

- 144,000 uninsured North Carolinians who need SUD treatment or behavior health services could gain access if we closed the gap.⁵
- 27% of North Carolinians in the coverage gap reported behavioral health concerns or SUD.⁶
- 12,000 North Carolina veterans are living in the coverage gap.⁷ About 1 in 15 veterans has a substance use disorder—therefore, roughly 800 North Carolina veterans may lack coverage for their SUD.⁸
- Only 13 percent of uninsured North Carolinians with behavioral health concerns and substance use disorder are receiving the treatment they need.⁹

How Expanding Access to Medicaid Helped Other States Treat SUD and Address the Opioid Crisis

- West Virginia reduced hospitalizations among uninsured people with substance use disorder or behavioral health problems by 78% after one year of closing the coverage gap.¹⁰
- Medicaid has covered 700% more substance use disorder treatments since Kentucky closed the coverage gap.¹¹
- Over 100,000 people in Ohio's expansion population are now receiving treatment for substance use disorder.¹²
- Federal funding to close the coverage gap paid for between 35 and 50 percent of the medication used to treat substance use disorders in **Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia, and Kentucky**.¹³

Additional information on closing the coverage gap in North Carolina can be accessed on the Justice Center's website: <http://www.ncjustice.org/?q=health/talking-points-closing-coverage-gap>.

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2. <http://wunc.org/post/opioid-overdoses-plague-north-carolina#stream/0>
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