

MEDICAID EXPANSION: WORKFORCE ACTIVITIES

In addition to expanding Medicaid eligibility, the Montana Health and Economic Livelihood Partnership (HELP) Act sought to improve the ability of low-income Montanans to obtain better-paying jobs. Toward that end, the act:

- required the Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) to create a workforce development program; and
- made participation in the workforce program one of several activities that could help people avoid disenrollment from Medicaid if they fail to pay the premiums required by the new law.

Medicaid enrollees are not required to take part in the workforce program but may choose to do so. Federal law does not currently allow states to require people to work in order to obtain Medicaid benefits.

HELP-Link: The Montana HELP Plan Workforce Program

DLI put its HELP-Link program into place in January 2016, at the same time Medicaid expansion went into effect. To participate, a person must complete an employment assessment and then obtain at least one “reportable service” in every 90-day period.

The assessment evaluates the person’s occupational talents and skills, the potential for improving his or her economic self-sufficiency, and the barriers that could prevent the person from obtaining appropriate employment. A Job Service employee reviews the assessment with the person to develop an individual employment plan. The person may then enroll in any training activity that supports that plan.

Both DLI and the Department of Public Health and Human Services, which administers the Medicaid program, send information on HELP-Link to each expansion enrollee. DLI also provides program brochures to partner organizations around the state and has its Job Service employees call people who have filled out the initial assessment but have not followed up on it.

The 2015 Legislature appropriated \$1.76 million to DLI to carry out both the workforce program and to improve its technology for reducing fraud, waste, and abuse. The 2017 Legislature appropriated \$1.77 million for the current biennium, restricted to workforce development activities.

Reportable Activities

HELP-Link services fall into one of four categories. Administrative rules specify the types of activities within each category that are considered “reportable” services. The table below outlines the four categories and the reportable services.

Job Search	Workforce Information	Career Guidance	Intensive Services
Receive assistance with preparing a resume or cover letter or applying for a job	Study labor supply and demand information	Complete a Montana Career Information System Assessment/Profile	Obtain a comprehensive assessment and description of skill level
Receive interview tips and guidance	Study short- and long-term industry and occupational projection information	Obtain a personalized employment plan	Obtain a specialized assessment and description of skill level
Obtain assistance with job matching or with a job development-employer contact or attend a Job Seeker Workshop	Identify applicable jobs with high growth and high demand	Obtain career testing through one of several programs	

HELP-Link participants also may receive assistance from other DLI workforce programs or post-secondary schools or training courses.

Preliminary Numbers

Information provided to the HELP Act Oversight Advisory Committee in July 2017 showed that more than 10,000 expansion enrollees completed HELP-Link surveys in the first 18 months of Medicaid expansion. As of July 2017, about nearly 81,000 people were enrolled in Medicaid expansion.

More than 12,300 expansion enrollees had received employment services of some type; some of those people had sought assistance through other DLI programs rather than through the HELP-Link program. The agency said that 78% of the 12,300 participants had found employment after receiving services.

The department will publish a report covering the 2017 HELP-Link activities in January 2018.

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Sources:

- 53-6-1302, MCA: Montana HELP Act program – legislative findings and purpose.
- 24.13.101, 24.13.105, and 24.13.109, Administrative Rules of Montana.
- Department of Labor & Industry Memorandum to the Children and Families Interim Committee, March 7, 2016.
- “HELP-Link Workforce Program Report,” *Department of Labor & Industry*, July 13, 2016.
- “Medicaid Expansion Member Profile as of 7/15/17,” DPHHS report to the Montana HELP Act Oversight Advisory Committee, July 31, 2017.
- “Number of Participants,” Department of Labor & Industry report to the Montana HELP Act Oversight Advisory Committee, July 31, 2017.
- Interview with Scott Eychner, administrator, DLI Workforce Services Division, and Tanner Woodward, manager, JSOB Programs, DLI Job Service Operation Bureau, Dec. 8, 2017.