



Medicaid's Non-Emergency Transportation: The Critical Role of Mobility Services in Accessing Behavioral and Preventative Care

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Background

Lack of transportation is often cited as a barrier to accessing health care, especially among the low-income population. Medicaid is the primary source of health insurance for low-income individuals in the United States. Medicaid's non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) facilitates free or low-cost transportation to and from medical appointments for enrollees who have transportation barriers. States are required to offer children from birth until the age of 21 necessary assistance with transportation to and from providers. However, states have wide latitude in deciding eligibility among adult Medicaid enrollees and the delivery method of Medicaid's NEMT services. The state of Washington operates a regional broker system to deliver NEMT services to all Medicaid enrolled children and adults. Under this system, the state employs six community-based brokers that coordinate trips in thirteen medical transportation regions. It is estimated that each year approximately 3.6 million Americans miss or delay medical care because of a lack of access to NEMT.



Research Project

The goal of this project is to examine rural-urban differences in NEMT utilization for accessing behavioral health services (including mental health and substance abuse treatment) and preventative services (including primary care and specialist visits) among Medicaid beneficiaries.

Specifically, I will use administrative medical claims data to: (1) Determine demand for NEMT services in the state of Washington, (2) Identify the most prevalent medical conditions among NEMT users, (3) Estimate the cost of NEMT services, (4) Estimate emergency department use for the medical conditions identified in objective (2). For each of the above objectives, I'll explore differences between rural and urban Medicaid enrollees.

The benefits of using an administrative claims database is that it is a single source of data on NEMT use and health care utilization for all Medicaid enrollees over multiple years. Findings from this study can help inform healthcare delivery and service improvements for low-income populations who are eligible for NEMT benefits. In areas with high demand of NEMT services, initiatives to develop community capacity to offer medical care and prevention programs could be considered.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

The research team consisted of Bidisha Mandal of Washington State University.

ABOUT THE FUNDERS

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EXPECTED DATE OF COMPLETION

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

<http://depts.washington.edu/pactrans/research/projects/medicaids-non-emergency-transportation-the-critical-role-of-mobility-services-in-accessing-behavioral-and-preventative-care/>