

Washington's reentry services: supporting those leaving a carceral setting

FAQ & key points

Overview

Reentry services—a new program under the Medicaid Transformation Project (MTP) renewal—provides essential services for individuals leaving a state prison, county/city jail, or youth correctional facility.

- Under this program, incarcerated individuals who are Medicaid-eligible will receive a set of services up to 90 days before their release.
- This program is slated to begin July 1, 2025.

What services will the program provide?

Incarcerated, Medicaid-eligible individuals will receive these approved services within 90 days of their release:

- Case management/care coordination
- Physical and behavioral clinical consultations as needed
- Lab and radiology
- Medication-assisted treatment (MAT) and other medications
- Services by community health workers
- 30-day supply of medications and durable medical equipment during the post-release period

Why is this program important?

The reentry program will:

- Prepare people for a successful transition and reentry into their community and help them live their healthiest life.
- Improve health outcomes and reduce rates of recidivism (re-offense), emergency department visits, overdoses, and death.
- Stabilize and treat common conditions prior to an individual's release, so they can reenter their community as healthy as possible.

How will the program provide services to incarcerated individuals?

Care coordination staff play a significant role in supporting those leaving a carceral setting. Care coordination staff will:

- Assess a person's health care needs
- Develop reentry care plans
- Ensure medications for opioid use disorder and alcohol use disorder are provided by facility staff
- Facilitate referrals and transportation to treatment following reentry

- Arrange for medications and durable medical equipment upon release
- Connect individuals to health-related social needs services, such as food, transportation, and housing

In addition, the reentry program puts many other factors into play:

- Passed legislation allows Washington State to change the Medicaid suspension rules upon and after a person's incarceration.
- Multiple partners are part of this work, including the Health Care Authority, Department of Corrections, local jails, youth correctional facilities and other similar institutions, managed care organizations, workgroups, among others.
- Different systems, data, and technology are working together for better coordinated care.
 - For example, a person can get a prescription filled the same day they are released, so they don't have to wait to get necessary medication. This same-day access is critical for an individual with substance use disorder, serious mental illness, or other behavioral health need.

How will state prisons, jails, and youth correctional facilities provide these services?

- CMS will allow a phase-in of services, based on facility readiness and pre-defined Service Levels.
 - Washington State is implementing a Service Level approach, so facilities can select a service level to implement.
- **Service Level 1** is structured as the minimum benefit package. Facilities are required to provide:
 - Case management
 - Medication-assisted treatment (MAT)
 - 30-day supply of prescribed medication, in hand upon release
- HCA also has authority to offer a non-mandatory set of services:
 - Full-pharmacy services
 - Lab and radiology
 - Behavioral health screening and targeted services
- Not all facilities will implement Service Level 1 on July 1, 2025.
 - If a facility is not able or prepared to implement Service Level 1 as of July 1, 2025, they can implement when ready.

Additional information

Background on reentry legislation & MTP

- Senate Bill (SB) 6430 passed in 2016, which allowed HCA to suspend—and not terminate—Medicaid coverage for incarcerated individuals.
- In 2021, House Bill 1348 passed, which delays the suspension of an incarcerated person's Medicaid coverage. SB 5304 also passed in 2021, which allowed HCA to seek federal funding to:
 - Provide pre-release services to a person leaving a carceral setting.
 - Maximize care coordination, so a person can transition into their community successfully and be connected to the care and services they need.

- MTP is Washington State's Section 1115 Medicaid demonstration waiver, which is an agreement between the Health Care Authority (HCA) and Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS).
 - In June 2023, CMS approved MTP to continue for an additional five years. The MTP renewal—called MTP 2.0—began July 1, 2023, and ends June 30, 2028.
 - MTP (the waiver) is what allows our state to have the reentry program and provide certain Medicaid services up to 90 days before a person's release.

Impacts before reentry legislation

Before 2017, people had to re-apply for Apple Health (Medicaid) coverage after release (because their coverage was terminated and not suspended). That process took a while to show a person as eligible for Medicaid coverage, so—during their most vulnerable and at-risk time—released individuals could not:

- Receive necessary medications, equipment, or treatments.
- Access medical or health-related social needs services, such as:
 - Scheduling an appointment with a health care provider or counselor
 - Securing housing, food, or transportation

This delay created significant dangers for people with substance use disorder, serious mental illness, or other behavioral health need.

HCA's reentry workgroup

- In 2021, HCA formed the Reentry Advisory Workgroup, which plays a crucial role in our state's reentry work. This workgroup—and the four subcommittees they oversee—are working on:
 - Improving communication with managed care organizations (MCOs) for when an enrollee is incarcerated.
 - Exploring a real-time data-sharing solution to provide booking and release notifications.
 - Transmitting health records (which is especially important for jails), using HCA's Clinical Data Repository.
- In past work, the Reentry Advisory Workgroup added jail locations to a file that informs MCOs of an enrollee's incarceration location. In partnership with MCOs, they also identified a solution that provides pharmacies same-day access upon an individual's release.
 - This way, a pharmacy can fill a person's prescription the same day as their release, which is essential for medications and treatments for SUD and other behavioral health conditions.