



Medicaid Expansion and Covid-19: Just the Facts

Every state in the nation is affected by the Covid-19 outbreak, including Kansas.

The spread of the virus has illuminated the cracks in our health care system. Among the largest of these cracks is the Kansas' high rate of uninsurance, which is only expected to grow as more people face layoffs and the loss of employer-sponsored health care coverage.

A critical factor in flattening the curve is ensuring that people who need testing and treatment can get it as soon as possible. Unfortunately, it is inevitable that many of those in need will avoid getting care because they can't afford the cost.

What's more, if they do seek care, many of the uninsured will show up in hospital emergency rooms, further stressing an already strained system. Many of Kansas' small rural hospitals are on the financial edge. A crush of very sick patients with no means to pay for their care will make an already dire situation even worse.

Medicaid has historically served as a critical safety net in times of economic and health crisis. It's guarantee of federal funding and countercyclical nature – as the economy declines, more people become eligible – ensures that basic services will be available to those most in need. But a state must participate in the program to realize these benefits. And Kansas does not participate in Medicaid expansion.

A pandemic caused by a contagious virus – the situation we are now in – emphasizes our shared responsibility to protect ourselves, our families and our neighbors. It is harder to separate individual interests from the interests of the community. A health system works best when everyone is included. The coronavirus makes it clear that we are all in danger if our friends and neighbors are left out.

For now, follow the advice of public health professionals in responding to the coronavirus. The [Kansas Department of Health and Environment's COVID-19 Resource Center](#) is a good source of information. Situations such as these highlight the vital importance of access to affordable health care in Kansas. We need every tool at our disposal to get through this health crisis. We need KanCare expansion now more than ever.