

Trends in Medicaid Prescription Volume During COVID-19

5 Slide Series, Volume 105

June 6, 2022

The Menges Group

Strategic Health Policy & Care Coordination Consulting

Introduction and Overview

- It has been widely documented that health care usage has been suppressed during the COVID pandemic.
- This edition specifically assesses Medicaid prescription volume, comparing calendar years 2019, 2020, and 2021.
- People living in poverty have been at increased risk of not accessing medications during COVID due to several barriers that existed pre-COVID, but which have been exacerbated by COVID. These barriers include transportation, relatively unstable housing, unsecure mailboxes, access to telehealth technologies, and other factors.

Summary of Key Findings

- Nationwide prescription volume decreased by 2.1% from 2019 (the last pre-pandemic year) to 2021 (the first full pandemic year).
- However, given that the Medicaid population grew by 17.2% from 2019 to 2021, this decrease is much larger than it appears. **Prescriptions per Medicaid beneficiary decreased by 16.4% from 2019 to 2021.**
- If prescriptions per beneficiary had remained at their 2019 level, the Medicaid population would have accessed 213 million more prescriptions across 2020 and 2021 than actually occurred.
- This drop-off is highly concerning in terms of what it could signify regarding reduced access to needed medication therapies.

Nationwide Medicaid Prescription Volume and Prescriptions per Medicaid Enrollee

- The largest prescription volume decrease occurred from 2019-2020, despite the COVID pandemic having a widespread impact on personal behaviors for “only” 9-10 months of 2020.
- While raw Medicaid prescription volume rose by 2.2% from 2020-2021, this second year of the pandemic saw a further 7.5% reduction in prescriptions per Medicaid enrollee.

Calendar Year	Nationwide Medicaid Prescription Volume		Average Medicaid Enrollment During Year		Prescriptions Per Medicaid Enrollee	
	Prescriptions	Percent Change Versus Prior Year	Enrollees	Percent Change Versus Prior Year	Prescriptions Per Enrollee	Percent Change Versus Prior Year
2019	721,653,423		71,586,539		10.1	
2020	691,596,159	-4.2%	75,965,108	6.1%	9.1	-9.7%
2021	706,638,509	2.2%	83,887,409	10.4%	8.4	-7.5%
Overall Percent Change, 2019-2021	-2.1%		17.2%		-16.4%	

5 Slide Series Overview

Our 5 Slide Series is typically a monthly publication whereby we briefly discuss/address a selected topic outside the confines of our client engagements. The Menges Group has developed a variety of datasets that we use to support our 5 Slide Series and client projects.

To be added to our list to receive these as they are published (or to be removed), please email us at pcall@themengesgroup.com. If you have questions about the content or data sources we have available, please email us at jmenges@themengesgroup.com or call 571-312-2360.

Address: 4001 9th Street N., Suite 227, Arlington, VA 22203

Website: www.themengesgroup.com