State of Alaska
Department of Health

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# Alaska Medicaid:
# Preparing for Upcoming Eligibility and Enrollment Changes

H.R. 1 changes, online enrollment, and practical ways to help people stay covered

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# Today’s Discussion

## What is changing — and how partners can help

1. **H.R. 1 Medicaid changes**

   Retroactive coverage • Work & Community Engagement • 6-month renewals

2. **Assisting with online enrollment**

   Using Alaska Connect effectively and knowing when another channel may be better

3. **Preventing delays and coverage gaps**

   Practical steps before and after an application or renewal is submitted

4. **Best practices for assisting elders**

   Plain-language, person-centered support and renewal follow-through

# H.R. 1 Medicaid Changes: Timeline at a Glance

## The changes do not all affect the same people in the same way

### Retroactive coverage

Applications made on or after January 1, 2027:

- Adult expansion: up to 1 month before the month of application
- Other Medicaid groups: up to 2 months before the month of application

### 6-month renewals

Beginning January 1, 2027, many adults in the Medicaid expansion group will have eligibility reviewed every 6 months.

Alaska Native and American Indian expansion adults remain on a 12-month renewal cycle.

### Work & Community Engagement

Scheduled to begin January 1, 2027 for certain expansion adults ages 19–64.

Alaska has requested additional implementation time through a good-faith effort exemption.

**Important: 6-month renewals and WCER are separate requirements. A person can be excluded from WCER and still be subject to a 6-month renewal — unless a separate renewal exception applies.**

Sources: Alaska DOH H.R. 1 Medicaid FAQs; CMS SMD #26-001; CMS Section 71112 guidance.



# Key Takeaways for Alaska Native and American Indian Members

## What is different for Alaska Native and American Indian people?

### WCER does not apply

Alaska Native and American Indian individuals who meet the federal definition are excluded from Work and Community Engagement Rules.

### 6-month renewals do not apply

Alaska Native and American Indian adults in the expansion group remain on a 12-month Medicaid renewal cycle.

### Status should be captured once

DPA will first use information already available. Once Alaska Native or American Indian status is established, DPA retains that determination for future reviews.

**IMPORTANT**

Retroactive coverage limits still change beginning January 1, 2027. The limit depends on the Medicaid eligibility group.

Source: Alaska DOH H.R. 1 Medicaid FAQs, accessed October 26, 2026.

# Retroactive Medicaid: What Changes January 1, 2027

## The window to cover bills from before the application month becomes shorter

### Before January 1, 2027

**Up to 3 months**

before the month of application, if the person met eligibility rules during those months

### Applications on or after January 1, 2027

**Adult expansion**

Maximum of 1 month before the month of application

**Other Medicaid groups**

Maximum of 2 months before the month of application

**What this means for assisters**

Start the application as soon as a need for coverage is identified. Do not rely on retroactive Medicaid to reach back as far as it does today — especially for an uninsured adult who may be in the expansion group.

Source: CMS Section 71112 guidance; CMS All-State Call 12/9/2025.

# Work & Community Engagement: Who Is Affected?

## WCER is targeted to certain adults in the Medicaid expansion group — not everyone on Medicaid

### Potentially subject to WCER



**Certain adults ages 19–64 in the Medicaid expansion group**

DPA will determine whether the rule applies and whether the person already meets it or qualifies for an exclusion or exception.

### Examples of people excluded from WCER

- Alaska Native and American Indian individuals
- Pregnant or postpartum individuals
- Certain parents, guardians, caretaker relatives, and family caregivers
- People who are medically frail or have other special medical needs
- Certain veterans with a total disability rating
- Certain former foster care individuals under age 26
- People meeting qualifying SNAP or TANF work requirements
- People participating in qualifying substance use treatment

**DPA checks exclusions before deciding a person must meet WCER.**

Source: Alaska DOH H.R. 1 Medicaid FAQs, accessed October 26, 2026.

# Work & Community Engagement: How a Person Can Meet the Rule

## More than one pathway can count — and qualifying activities can be combined

### 80 hours/month

Paid work, job training, volunteer or community service, education, and other qualifying activities may count.

### Half-time student

Enrollment at least half-time can meet the education pathway. Less-than-half-time education hours may still count toward the 80-hour standard.

### Income standard

Qualifying household income may satisfy the rule. The federal standard is tied to 80 hours × the federal minimum wage.

## How DPA will verify

- Use reliable information already available first — including income data and other administrative records.
- Ask only for the additional information needed when available records are not enough.
- Send a notice explaining what is needed, how to submit it, and the deadline.

### Implementation timing

The federal start date is January 1, 2027. Alaska has requested additional time through a good-faith effort exemption.

Source: Alaska DOH H.R. 1 Medicaid FAQs; CMS community engagement guidance.

# 6-Month Medicaid Renewals

## More frequent eligibility reviews for many adults in the expansion group

### Starting January 1, 2027

- Many adults in the Medicaid expansion group will have eligibility reviewed every 6 months instead of every 12 months.
- A 6-month renewal does not mean coverage automatically ends every 6 months.
- DPA will first try to renew using information already available. A form is not always required.
- Different people in the same household may have different renewal schedules.

### Who stays on a 12-month cycle?

**Alaska Native and American Indian adults in the expansion group**

People in "traditional" Medicaid groups based on age, disability, pregnancy, or other non-expansion eligibility categories

**Best assister action: keep contact information current, watch for renewal notices, and respond by the date shown when DPA asks for information.**

Source: Alaska DOH H.R. 1 Medicaid FAQs; CMS SMD #26-001.

# Assisting with Online Enrollment: Alaska Connect

## Alaska Connect is the DPA client portal

### Clients can use Alaska Connect to:

1. Apply online
2. Renew benefits
3. Update contact information
4. Report changes
5. Upload documents

### A practical workflow when helping someone

| | |
|---|---|
| **Start** | Use the client's myAlaska account or help them create one. |
| **Complete** | Answer all required questions and review before signing/submitting. |
| **Upload** | Send clear, readable documents when they are requested or available. |
| **Confirm** | Keep the submission confirmation and note any follow-up deadline. |

If the portal is not a good fit, clients can still use DPA offices, the Virtual Contact Center, paper forms, or other available service channels.

Source: Alaska DOH Division of Public Assistance — Alaska Connect client portal.

# Strategies to Reduce Processing Delays or Prevent Coverage Gaps

## Most preventable delays start with missing information, missed notices, or difficulty reconnecting with the client

### Before submitting

- Use current mailing address, phone number, and email.
- Gather household, identity, income, and other requested information before starting when possible.
- Make sure Alaska Native or American Indian status is accurately captured.
- Review the application for unanswered required questions and signatures.

### After submitting

- Upload clear, readable documents and keep copies.
- Save the submission confirmation or other proof of submission.
- Open DPA letters and respond by the date shown.
- If something was missed, submitted information is not showing, or a deadline is near, contact DPA right away.

**One important habit** Check the case or application status before creating a duplicate submission. When follow-up is needed, use the existing case and keep documentation of what was sent and when.

Sources: Alaska DOH Tips to Avoid Delays; Alaska DOH H.R. 1 Medicaid FAQs.

# Best Practices for Assisting Elders with Enrollment

## Make the process fit the person — not the other way around

### Start with the preferred channel

Ask whether online, paper, phone, or in-person support will be easiest. Online is not always the best option.

### Slow the process down

Use plain language, larger text when possible, and one task at a time. Read back key answers before submitting.

### Confirm how DPA can reach them

Make sure mailing address, phone, email, and access to those accounts are current and realistic.

### Gather common documents first

Have identification, income/benefit information, Medicare information, and other requested records ready when possible.

### Use trusted support appropriately

Ask whether the person wants a family member, Tribal health staff member, or authorized representative involved in ongoing follow-up.

### Track every deadline

Review notices together, write down due dates, and keep proof of documents submitted.

**Reminder: age-based “traditional” Medicaid is not subject to WCER or the new 6-month expansion renewal requirement.**

Sources: Alaska DOH H.R. 1 Medicaid FAQs; DPA service-channel information.

# What ITU and Tribal Partners Can Do Now

## Five actions that will matter before and after January 1, 2027

1. Confirm Alaska Native/American Indian status is reflected in the Medicaid record when working with a client.
2. Help clients keep mailing address, phone number, and email current with DPA.
3. Encourage clients to open every DPA notice and respond by the stated deadline when action is required.
4. Help gather and submit requested information — and keep proof of what was sent and when.
5. Use StayCovered.alaska.gov for the most current H.R. 1 information and changes to implementation timing.

**Partners are a critical bridge between a notice being mailed and a client successfully completing the next step.**

Source: Alaska DOH Stay Covered partner information and H.R. 1 Medicaid FAQs.

# Knowledge Check

## Three quick scenarios

1

**A 45-year-old Alaska Native adult is enrolled in the Medicaid expansion group. Under H.R. 1, how often is the regular Medicaid renewal scheduled?**

A. Every 3 months  B. Every 6 months  C. Every 12 months

2

**An elder applies for Medicaid in February 2027 and would have been eligible before the application month. What is the maximum retroactive Medicaid period for a non-expansion eligibility group?**

A. 1 month  B. 2 months  C. 3 months

3

**Which action is most likely to prevent an avoidable coverage gap?**

A. Keep contact information current and respond to DPA notices by the deadline
B. Wait until coverage closes before submitting documents
C. Submit a new application every time a notice arrives

# Resources and Contact Information

## Use current Alaska sources — H.R. 1 guidance is still evolving

### Stay Covered

staycovered.alaska.gov

Current H.R. 1 Medicaid updates, FAQs, partner information, and implementation notices

### Division of Public Assistance

| | |
|---|---|
| **Alaska Connect** | Apply, renew, update contact information, report changes, and upload documents |
| **Virtual Contact Center** | 800-478-7778 |
| **Alaska Relay** | 7-1-1 |

**Because federal guidance and Alaska implementation details are still being finalized, always check the current Stay Covered page before advising a client.**

Sources: Alaska DOH Division of Public Assistance and Stay Covered.

# Thank you

Questions & discussion