

Trump's Hunt for Undocumented Medicaid Enrollees Yields Few Violators

Many of the enrollees whose eligibility the Trump administration said it could not confirm may indeed be U.S. citizens.

April 2, 2026 By Phil Galewitz and KFF Health News

Last August, as part of the federal government's crackdown on people in the country illegally, the Trump administration [sent states the names](#) of hundreds of thousands of Medicaid enrollees with orders to determine whether they were ineligible based on immigration status.

But seven months later, findings from five states shared with KFF Health News show that the reviews have uncovered little evidence of a widespread problem.

Only U.S. citizens and some lawfully present immigrants are eligible for Medicaid, which covers health care costs for people with low incomes and disabilities, and the closely related Children's Health Insurance Program. Both programs are administered by states.

Spokespeople from Pennsylvania's and Colorado's Medicaid agencies said, as of March, the states had found no one who needed to be terminated from Medicaid. That was after checking a combined 79,000 names.

Texas has reviewed records of more than 28,000 Medicaid enrollees at the Trump administration's request and terminated coverage for 77 of them, according to Jennifer Ruffcorn, a spokesperson for the Texas Department of Human Services.

Ohio has checked 65,000 Medicaid enrollees, of which 260 people were disenrolled from the program, said Stephanie O'Grady, a spokesperson for the Ohio Department of Medicaid.

In Utah, 42 of the 8,000 enrollees identified by the Trump administration had their Medicaid coverage terminated, said Becky Wickstrom, a spokesperson for the state's Department of Workforce Services.

In announcing the reviews, Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. said: "We are tightening oversight of enrollment to safeguard taxpayer dollars and guarantee that these vital programs serve only those who are truly eligible under the law."

Leonardo Cuello, a research professor at Georgetown University's Center for Children and Families, said the reviews ordered by the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services were unneeded because states check immigration status when people sign up.

"It is entirely predictable that all of these burdensome reviews that the federal government is forcing upon states would yield no pay dirt," Cuello said. "The states had already done the reviews once, and CMS was just making them reverify the same information they had already checked. Making states go through the same bureaucratic process twice is incredibly wasteful and inefficient."

CMS spokesperson Chris Krepich said in a statement to KFF Health News that the ongoing checks are verifying eligibility "for certain enrollees whose status could not be confirmed through federal data sources."

"CMS provides states with regular reports for follow-up review, and states are responsible for independently verifying eligibility and taking appropriate action consistent with federal requirements," he said.

But the findings shared with KFF Health News also suggest that many of the enrollees whose eligibility the Trump administration said it could not confirm are indeed U.S. citizens. O'Grady said Ohio found that, of the 65,000 names referred by the federal government, the state already had information on 53,000 confirming them as citizens and an additional 11,000 showing appropriate immigration status for Medicaid.

Caseworkers then worked on the remaining 1,000 names to review their information or reach out for more details, she said.

CMS did not answer questions about the findings from the states sampled by KFF Health News or provide information about responses it received from all 50 states and the District of Columbia, which were instructed to perform verification checks.

The agency also did not respond to a question about whether it's forwarding the names of those whose Medicaid coverage was terminated to federal immigration officials.

In June, advisers to Kennedy ordered CMS to share information about Medicaid enrollees with the Department of Homeland Security, prompting a lawsuit by some states alarmed that the administration would use the information for its deportation campaign against residents living in the U.S. without authorization.

A federal judge [ruled in December](#) that Immigration and Customs Enforcement workers could access information only about people in the country unlawfully in the Medicaid databases of the states that sued.

CMS continues to send states lists of names at least every few months, though state officials say

the numbers have declined since the first batch last summer.

People without legal status are ineligible for federally funded health coverage, including Medicaid, Medicare, and plans through the Affordable Care Act marketplaces. Medicaid does reimburse hospitals for providing emergency care to people without legal status if they meet income and other program requirements.

Seven states and the District of Columbia provide health coverage regardless of immigration status, funding the programs with their own money.

In March 2025, CMS began financial reviews of those programs. “CMS has identified over \$1.8 billion in federal funds that are being recouped through voluntary returns and deferrals of future federal Medicaid payments,” Krepich said. He did not answer how much has been collected so far or from which states.

Medicaid’s overall spending topped \$900 billion in fiscal year 2024.

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