

News...

... From the Community Behavioral Health Association of Illinois

Springfield, IL

For Immediate Release

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82,000 Added to Illinois Mental Health, Addiction Treatment Rolls

In 2020, Illinois had 2,536,996 enrolled in Medicaid compared to 2,126,493 in Dec. 2019, an increase of 410,503 individuals or a 19.3% jump.

(Springfield, IL) – As Governor JB Pritzker and Illinois lawmakers grapple with a [\\$3.9 billion budget gap](#), the state’s Medicaid rolls in 2020 have “exploded” with an estimated 82,000 additional people with mental health or addiction problems enrolling in the federal healthcare plan, according to a top behavioral health advocacy group.

According to [the latest data available for Illinois Medicaid enrollees](#), as of November 2020, Illinois had 2,536,996 people enrolled compared to 2,126,493 in December 2019, an increase of 410,503 individuals or a 19.3% jump.

The Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services has a standard measure that one-in-five Medicaid enrollees have behavioral health issues, a measure which yields approximately 82,100 new clients with mental health or addiction treatment needs in 2020, according to Community Behavioral Health Care Association CEO Marvin Lindsey.

"Statewide, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Medicaid caseload has exploded, and community behavioral health providers have also witnessed an exploding caseload, sometimes as much as 30 to 40% at local agencies," said Lindsey. "With 82,000 new behavioral clients seeking care, Governor Pritzker and lawmakers need to be thinking about how they can help us financially to meet the overwhelming demand for services not hurt us with budget cuts."

To provide context to the surging caseload in 2020, Lindsey noted that in the comparable period of [December 2018 to November 2019](#), Illinois Medicaid rolls actually dropped from 2,168,091 to 2,126,493 or a 1.2% decline.

Meanwhile, the Illinois opioid crisis for example remains a crisis, with a record number of overdoses in 2020, Lindsey notes.

According to the Illinois Department of Public Health [data](#), opioid overdose deaths rose 36.5% in the first five months of 2020 from 197 deaths in January to 269 deaths.

The increasing number of suicides across the state also demand immediate action. For example, DuPage County saw a [23% increase in the first 6 months of 2020](#), while Cook County's Black Community experienced [71 suicides in the first 9 months of 2020](#), compared to 56 in all of 2019.

"COVID has caused an avalanche of cases to crash into a chronically underfunded, understaffed state behavioral system further brutalized financially during the budget impasse years, said Lindsey. "The 'doing more with less' ship has sailed, so what we need now, more than ever, is sustainable investments by the state in community-based mental health and substance use services to fight the unyielding opioid epidemic and mental health crisis that continues to rage havoc in families and communities across Illinois."