

States Find Savings Through Medicaid Expansion

BY MICHAEL OLLOVE
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WASHINGTON — Medicaid expansion has given a budget boost to participating states, mostly by allowing them to use federal money instead of state dollars to care for pregnant women, inmates, and people with mental illness, disabilities, HIV/AIDS, and breast and cervical cancer, according to two new reports.

States that levy assessments and fees on health care providers, which have collected higher revenues as a result of expansion, have reaped extra benefits.

Under the Affordable Care Act, states can choose to expand Medicaid, the joint state-federal health program for the poor, to adults with incomes up to 138 percent of the federal poverty level (\$16,242 for an individual). The federal government is paying the entire bill for the new Medicaid beneficiaries through 2016, a declining share over the following three years, and 90 percent thereafter.

Twenty-nine states and the District of Columbia have opted to expand. One argument against expanding Medicaid is that doing so will put a strain on state budgets, either now or in the future. But the two reports, one commissioned by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJ) and the other by the Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF), suggest the opposite.

The RWJ report examined eight Medicaid expansion states: Arkansas, Colorado, Kentucky, Michigan, New Mexico, Oregon, Washington and West Virginia. It found that those states, selected for their regional and demographic diversity, will save (or collect) a total of \$1.8 billion through Medicaid expansion by the end of 2015.

"I don't know any other way of describing it except as a win-win for us," said Audrey Tayse Haynes, secretary of the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, which



METRO GRAPHICS

expects to have saved nearly \$109 million by July 1.

The KFF analysis, which looked at Connecticut, New Mexico and Washington state, concluded that those states have experienced "state savings and revenue gains with limited costs resulting from expansion, even as some potential fiscal gains have not yet been tracked."

Historically, many states have used their own money to pay for programs and services for people without insurance. In expansion states, many of those uninsured now are getting coverage through Medicaid, which means the federal government is paying for their care. The states that were the most generous to the uninsured before expansion are garnering the biggest benefits now.

"You can say states that had more significant programs for the uninsured before expansion are indeed going to see the most significant savings" in certain budgetary areas, said Patricia Boozang, one of the co-authors of the RWJ study. Boozang is senior managing director of Manatt Health Solutions, which prepared the report for RWJ.

Meanwhile, the states that have rejected expansion are forgoing billions in federal

aid. A report last year from the Urban Institute and RWJ projected that by the year 2022, the states that rejected expansion will have missed out on more than \$423 billion in federal Medicaid money.

A number of the states have found mental health services to be a particularly fruitful area for savings.

Michigan is a case in point. Prior to Medicaid expansion, the state spent tens of millions of dollars each year on community mental health services for those who did not qualify for Medicaid and did not have health insurance. Farah Hanley, deputy director for central operations for the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, said that so many of those served by such programs became eligible for Medicaid after expansion that the state was able to cut funding to them by about two-thirds. In fiscal year 2015, the state expects to reap \$190 million in savings.

Similarly, Kentucky expects to have saved \$30 million in mental health spending by July 1.

States also have saved money on care for pregnant women. Prior to expansion, many states did not extend Medicaid coverage to poor, young adult women until they became pregnant. At that

point, states and the federal government shared the cost of their care, based on a "matching" formula that varies from state to state. Now women who qualify for the expanded Medicaid program are receiving care wholly funded by the federal government, both before and after they become pregnant.

For Washington state that has meant savings of more than \$38 million, while Arkansas has saved \$24.5 million.

Expansion states also have saved money on health care for prison inmates, according to the two reports. States are responsible for providing health care to inmates when they receive care inside the prison walls. However, if an inmate needs in-patient hospital care outside prison and is eligible for Medicaid, the federal government contributes based on the matching formula.

In states that have expanded Medicaid, hundreds of thousands of inmates who didn't qualify for Medicaid before are now eligible. When those inmates receive care outside prison, the federal government pays for it.

That change is projected to save Michigan \$19 million. Kentucky will save more than \$16 million, Colorado \$10 million and Washington state \$2.1 million.

Before expansion, some states extended Medicaid coverage to those considered "medically needy" because of certain medical conditions, such as HIV/AIDS and cervical or breast cancer. Now, many of those people are part of the expansion population, so the federal government will pay for their care.

The medically needy category has produced savings of \$8 million in Arkansas, \$16 million in Kentucky, and \$46.5 million in Washington.

Medical services for the disabled also produced significant savings: Arkansas will save more than \$11 million and Kentucky \$9.6 million on health care for disabled individuals.

Boston Marathon Bomber Cries At Federal Death Penalty Trial

BY DENISE LAVOIE
AP Legal Affairs Writer

BOSTON — For the first time in court, Boston Marathon bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev dropped his blank, impassive demeanor and cried as his sobbing aunt briefly took the stand Monday in his federal death penalty trial.

Tsarnaev, 21, wiped tears from his eyes quickly and fidgeted in his chair as his mother's sister sobbed uncontrollably. He had maintained an uninterested expression since his trial began in January. The aunt, Patimat Suleimanova, cried as she sat down about 10 feet from Tsarnaev. The tears began falling before she began to testify, and she was only able to answer questions about her name, her year of birth and where she was born.

After a few minutes, Judge George O'Toole Jr. suggested that the defense call a different witness so she could compose herself. As she left the witness stand, Tsarnaev used a tissue to wipe his eyes and nose.

Five relatives — three cousins and two aunts — took the witness stand, though the aunt who broke down did not complete her testimony. As Tsarnaev was led out of the courtroom before the lunch recess, he blew a kiss at the other aunt, who also cried during her testimony. The relatives acknowledged they had not seen Tsarnaev since he was 8, when he moved to the U.S. with his family.

Tsarnaev, who had lived in the former Soviet republic of Kyrgyzstan and the Dagestan region of Russia, was convicted last month of 30 federal charges in the bombings, including 17 that carry the

possibility of the death penalty. He moved to the U.S. in 2002 and committed the bombings, which killed three people and wounded 260 others, when he was 19.

Prosecutors say Tsarnaev and his radicalized older brother, Tamerlan, were equal partners in the bombing, and they have urged a jury to sentence Tsarnaev to death.

Tsarnaev's lawyers say Tamerlan, 26, was the mastermind of the attack and lured his brother into his plan. Tamerlan died days after the bombings following a shootout with police.

A cousin testified Monday that Dzhokhar was a kind and warm child, so gentle that he once cried while watching "The Lion King."

"I think that his kindness made everybody around him kind," Raisat Suleimanova said through a Russian interpreter.

Assistant U.S. Attorney William Weinreb pounced, asking her if she believes a deadly attack on innocent civilians can be considered kind. Tsarnaev's lawyer objected, and Suleimanova was not allowed to answer the question.

Shakhruzat Suleimanova, a sister of Dzhokhar's mother, Zubeidat, testified that Dzhokhar, Tamerlan and their two sisters were well-behaved as children.

"They were so good. They wouldn't hurt a fly," she said.

Suleimanova said the family was crushed when Zubeidat moved to the U.S. with her husband and children. Five or six years later, when Zubeidat returned to Russia for a visit, the family was shocked to see her sister, always a fashionable dresser, cloaked in black and wearing a Muslim headscarf.

Many States Struggle To Pay For Police Body Cameras

BY JAKE GROVUM
Stateline.org

WASHINGTON — As the nationwide push intensifies for police to wear body cameras, states and cities have encountered one consistent roadblock to adopting the technology: the cost.

The price of a single camera ranges widely, from less than \$100 to more than \$1,000, based on the size of the purchase (larger police departments often get a discount) and whether the deal includes data storage services. But managing and storing the video costs many times the price of the cameras themselves. And because the technology is so new, it's likely that it will have to be replaced fairly quickly, which would require additional expenditures.

In a survey of 40 police departments by the Police Executive Research Forum conducted last fall and released this year, nearly 40 percent of departments without body cameras cited cost as the primary barrier to using them.

President Barack Obama has called for \$75 million in new federal spending to help pay for 50,000 police body cameras for local police departments. States are struggling with whether cam-

eras should be worn all the time and whether the video should be a public record, which also can affect costs. As of April 20, 34 states were considering 117 bills related to police body cameras, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL). So far, only a handful of states have figured out how to pay for them.

"They (cameras) can be a really great tool if implemented correctly," said Lindsay Miller, a senior research associate at the police forum, a membership organization of police and government officials, academics and others who work in the field. "It's not as easy as sticking a camera on an officer and sending them out in the field."

Put simply, Miller said, "The money has to come from somewhere."

In New Jersey, legislation enacted last fall requires officers or the vehicles they routinely use in traffic stops to have cameras, either on the officer or on the dashboard in the car.

Giving local governments the option of body camera or dashboard camera was a compromise to help pass the bill, said Democratic Assemblyman Paul Moriarty, who sponsored the legislation. The measure only applies to newly acquired vehicles, and it exempts officers who work

in administrative roles or detectives who don't regularly conduct traffic stops.

The most significant part of the compromise, however, is the funding mechanism: The legislation levies a \$25 surcharge on convicted drunken drivers, a fine that stays in the municipality where the offense occurred. That funding can go toward purchasing cameras or data storage and other expenses that make having police cameras "workable," Moriarty said.

"We have a problem here with the state mandating something and not coming up with some way to pay for it," he said. "Some of these larger cities, they're strapped for cash — and some of the smaller ones too."

Lawmakers in some other states are trying a more straightforward approach. They are calling for state money to help pay for a technology they see as a necessity, and one for which the public and local police departments are clamoring.

A measure advancing in Texas, for instance, would dedicate \$50 million in state money to implement a requirement that officers across the state wear cameras. Several body camera bills have gained bipartisan support in Austin; one already has cleared the Senate, and

Republican Gov. Greg Abbott has signaled his support for body camera legislation this session.

Democratic Rep. Ron Reynolds, who is pushing the \$50 million measure, said finding the money to support body camera requirements was just as important as the requirement itself.

"If there's no funding, then it's nothing more than an unfunded mandate; it's nothing more than a noble idea," Reynolds said. "A lot of these municipalities, they don't have the revenue to do it, they're barely getting by now, they have to make it based on lean budgets."

Reynolds admits his bill could change as the session winds toward its June adjournment, but he is optimistic the state will provide at least some money to pay for body cameras.

"Worst case scenario we're going to have limited funding where we can establish good practices and some good pilots," Reynolds said. "Texas is going to be probably the first state with a full comprehensive body camera bill, and that's going to send big shockwaves across the country because we're known as a fairly conservative state, a red state, and we're going to take the lead."

Some lawmakers in South Carolina, particularly the

South Carolina Legislative Black Caucus, want the state to spend as much as \$21.5 million for police body cameras in the wake of the Walter Scott shooting. Scott, an African-American, was shot in the back and killed by a white police officer as he ran away in North Charleston, S.C., on April 4. The shooting was captured on a cellphone video by a bystander.

The Police Executive Research Forum survey found most agencies spent between \$800 and \$1,200 per camera to purchase them, a daunting price tag for departments already strapped for cash.

But it is the ongoing costs that are the real challenge. The New Orleans Police Department plans to purchase 350 body cameras, but is budgeting \$1.2 million over five years, mostly for data storage. Other departments, the police forum found, expect to spend \$2 million for a few years of data storage.

In Iowa, the Des Moines Police Department is looking for \$300,000 just to start a body camera program. In Minnesota, Duluth's initial \$5,000 purchase of 84 cameras ballooned to about \$78,000 for licensing and data storage. Last year, Duluth's

police budget was \$19.1 million, while Des Moines spent more than \$59 million on its police force.

Many states are debating the issues that surround police cameras without tackling the funding question, said Richard Williams, a criminal justice policy specialist with the NCSL. In many instances, he said, lawmakers are focused on how long departments should have to keep video, and if or when recordings should be made public.

Miller, with the Police Executive Research Forum, said those issues are important, but that for police departments, cost is the overriding concern.

Officers could potentially record millions of videos a year, any number of which could be used as part of a criminal proceeding, a public records request or for another official purpose. The cost of downloading, logging, handling and storing all that video can be staggering.

"Most of the agencies that we worked with say the biggest issue is the backend data storage," she said. "It can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to store video each year."

Suicide Bomber Blows Himself Up During Attack

BY ALBERT AJI
Associated Press

DAMASCUS, Syria — Syrian soldiers battled a small group of insurgents, including a suicide bomber, who attacked a Syrian military logistics facility in the capital Monday, militants and activists said.

The relatively rare Damascus attack took place in the Rukneddine neighborhood and was claimed by the al-Qaida branch in Syria. Syrian state media said all the militants were killed, but provided no further details.

The director of the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, Rami Abdulrahman, said the bombing appeared to target a general who is responsible for army logistics and supplies. He said the general was wounded in the blast, while three of his guards were killed in the ensuing clashes with the militant attackers.

The Observatory relies on

a network of activists inside Syria for its information.

The al-Qaida-affiliated Nusra Front posted a claim of responsibility on a Twitter account associated with the group, saying three of the group's fighters were involved.

Syrian state television later broadcast video of what it said was the scene of the attack,

showing the bodies of two men dressed in camouflage sprawled in the street. The legs of the suicide bomber were visible on the pavement nearby.

Attacks such as Monday's have been rare in the capital, which remains under the firm grip of President Bashar Assad.

Elsewhere, heavy fighting erupted in a mountainous area near the Lebanese border Monday after the Nusra Front launched a surprise attack targeting Syrian army and Hezbollah positions there.

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