




# County of Fairfax, Virginia

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** May 5, 2023

**TO:** Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** Christopher A. Leonard   
Deputy County Executive

**SUBJECT:** Pandemic Unwinding – Medicaid Renewals

A recent [Washington Post](#) article highlighted the Medicaid unwinding process that is underway across the country as pandemic-era policies come to an end. As the Board will recall, an initial update on local efforts was provided via memorandum on January 13, 2023. Today's memorandum is intended to provide a further status update as the process has now started.

During the three-year public health emergency declared by federal officials due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Medicaid enrollees were not subject to the required, annual renewal process, effectively suspending the renewal process. As the impact of the pandemic waned and the public emergency ended, the federal policies through the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services have reverted to their pre-pandemic state.

The restarting of the renewal process locally has effectively doubled the number of renewals needing to be processed over the next year. The chart below highlights the total number of renewals due, which includes all those suspended over the last three years. Medicaid enrollees are provided a 45-day advanced notice when their renewals are due. Beginning March 20, Virginia households whose renewals are due in May 2023 began receiving Medicaid renewal packets from the Virginia Department of Medical Assistance. As of April 25, Fairfax County has 101,947 Medicaid renewals that are due to be processed in the next year. In accordance with state policy, the Medicaid unwinding is planned to end in April 2024. The following chart shows the number of Medicaid renewals due by month along with the number of county residents associated with each renewal effort.

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<b>Month</b>	<b>Total # Medicaid Renewals Due</b>	<b>Total # Medicaid Enrollees</b>
<b>May-23</b>	2,916	5,627
<b>Jun-23</b>	7,263	12,194
<b>Jul-23</b>	9,831	16,818
<b>Aug-23</b>	8,569	14,979
<b>Sep-23</b>	6,864	12,244
<b>Oct-23</b>	10,275	16,867
<b>Nov-23</b>	10,176	16,127
<b>Dec-23</b>	8,380	13,959
<b>Jan-24</b>	8,162	14,585
<b>Feb-24</b>	10,248	18,499
<b>Mar-24</b>	9,751	18,375
<b>Apr-24</b>	9,512	18,467
<b>Total</b>	<b>101,947</b>	<b>178,741</b>

*Source: Locality Active Enrollment Report (MMIS/VDSS Data Warehouse) – as of April 2023.*

As required by the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS), the Fairfax County Department of Family Services (DFS) restarted the Medicaid renewal process in April 2023. Understanding the potential consequences of people losing coverage, DFS has approached this work to ensure that individuals and families who remain eligible for Medicaid continue receiving it. Further, coordinating access to health care with other needed services is foundational for the overall health and well-being of our residents. Accordingly, the Public Assistance and Employment Services Division (PAES) within DFS developed an operational plan to complete the suspended renewals alongside the daily work of processing applications and renewals for SNAP, childcare subsidies, and TANF cash assistance.

The operational plan considers the challenges involved in completing the Medicaid unwinding within the required 12-month timeframe while ensuring individuals and families in the community maintain vital access to food and healthcare. DFS aims to keep the unwinding process as simple as possible and has developed priorities to ensure individuals and families have timely access to needed assistance.

The DFS approach is resident-focused while emphasizing the maximization of resources, efficient processes, and data-driven decision making. Strategies include:

- I. Human Resources:
  - a. More than 50 new employees have been hired over the past year to support the Medicaid and other public assistance benefits work. They have been trained or are being trained to focus on Medicaid case processing.
  - b. In addition to hiring merit employees, DFS has onboarded several temporary staff who can support the benefits processing work.

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- c. With a focus on the Medicaid unwinding mandate, all lines of business within the Benefit Programs area were evaluated and some staff have been reallocated to focus on Medicaid unwinding requirements.
  - d. VDSS has made available additional funding to assist counties with the cost of overtime and temporary employees.
- II. Community Engagement and Outreach:
- a. DFS and the Health Department co-host a standing monthly meeting on Medicaid unwinding with health safety net stakeholders and partners to focus on ways to support broad community outreach and education of Medicaid enrollees on the renewal process. This group includes community-based organizations, medical providers, pharmacies, mental health providers, and other community stakeholders.
  - b. Published a dedicated web page on the DFS Fairfax County website that includes information for public awareness and also communication templates for partner organizations to use in their publications. [Normal Medicaid Enrollment Resumes | Family Services \(fairfaxcounty.gov\)](#).
  - c. Upon request, on demand information sessions about Medicaid unwinding have been conducted for community partners.

The focus of Medicaid unwinding is to keep eligible households connected to Medicaid; however, not everyone will remain eligible. For any individual or family who is no longer categorically eligible, information will be shared about applying and enrolling for health insurance through the Affordable Care Act as well as accessing medical services through Federally Qualified Health Centers and free clinics. If an eligible household is discontinued from Medicaid, there is a 90-day period for them to contact the agency and complete the renewal.

As stated in the January 13 memo to the Board, DFS is well-prepared for the ending of pandemic-era waivers. Federal and state partners have been consistent regarding the eventual sunset of these flexibilities. DFS leadership and staff are ready for the challenge and will update the Board as this work proceeds. In the meantime, for questions and/or further information, please contact [Michael Becketts](#), DFS Director, at 703-324-7749.

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