



Governor Dan McKee's Overdose Task Force

October 14, 2026

Richard Leclerc, Director, Rhode Island Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities & Hospitals

Jerome Larkin, MD; Director, Rhode Island Department of Health

Alex Gautieri, MSW, LCSW; Task Force Community Co-Chair

Ana Novais, MA; Assistant Secretary, Rhode Island Executive Office of Health and Human Services

Cathy Schultz, MPH; Task Force Director, Rhode Island Executive Office of Health and Human Services

**RHODE
ISLAND**

Welcome and Announcements

**RHODE
ISLAND**

RI-PrevCon 2026



Rhode Island's New Public Awareness Campaign

"Treatment Engagement: Together"



National Prescription Drug Take Back Day



Saturday, October 24
10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

DEA TakeBack.com



Celebrating Recovery: Main Rally in Providence

**NATIONAL
RECOVERY
MONTH**







Washington County Rally4Recovery



East Bay Rally4Recovery



Newport Rally4Recovery



2026 Community Conversations and CODE Summit

Thursday, November 5; 8:30 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Crowne Plaza Hotel Ballroom

801 Greenwich Ave., Warwick, Rhode Island

- Learn and engage with Rhode Islanders committed to breaking stigma and ending the overdose crisis.
- Highlights include the Rhode Island Health Equity Zones (HEZ) and their overdose prevention initiatives, a facilitated panel discussion, a resource fair, and networking opportunities.



Register Today!



¡Regístrate hoy!





Rhode Island Overdose Fatality Review (OFR) Team: 2026 Stimulant-Focused Recommendations

October 14, 2026

Governor Dan McKee's Overdose Task Force

Goals of the OFR Team

- Examine emerging trends in the overdose epidemic
- Identify recommendations for prevention and gaps in current policies, systems, and operations

OFR Quick Facts

- Quarterly case reviews, with additional meetings focused on recommendations
- Reports: Quarterly and annual
- Active members: About 28

Membership



Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH)

- Coordination Team
- Center for Emergency Medical Services
- Office of State Medical Examiners
- Prescription Drug Monitoring Program
- Task Force Racial Equity Work Group

Other Rhode Island State Agencies

- Rhode Island Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities & Hospitals
- Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth & Families
- Rhode Island Executive Office of Health and Human Services

Community Partners

- Family Representation
- Harm Reduction and Recovery Support Agencies
- Heroin-Opioid Prevention Effort (HOPE) Initiative
- New England High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA)
- Rhode Island Regional Prevention Coalitions
- Treatment Providers/Hospitals/Community Health Centers
- URI Community First Responder Program

OFR As a Qualitative Data Source



Statewide
Rural Health
Transformation
Program

Statewide
Community
Overdose
Engagement
(CODE) Initiatives

RIDOH Rural
Naloxone Campaign

RIDOH Policy
Recommendations
(i.e., naloxone)

RIDOH
Short-Term Funding
Opportunities

February and August 2026 Case Reviews



Topics

- Stimulant-Involved Overdoses (January 1 – June 30, 2025)
- Cocaine-Related Fatal Overdoses without Opioid Involvement (January 1 – December 31, 2025)

Guest Subject-Matter Experts

- Brown University Health Recovery Center
- Open Door Health
- Project Weber/RENEW
- Stimulant Treatment and Recovery Team (START) Program at Boston Medical Center

February 2026: Key Recommendations



Promote messaging and education about overamping and co-occurring chronic health conditions.

Encourage healthcare professionals to ensure that patients have access to medications for chronic cardiac conditions, substance use, and substance use-related conditions.

Promote information that empowers individuals who are feeling hopeless and/or lonely to reach out for additional support. Hang signage with resources in common areas of community spaces.

Expand treatment access and availability for stimulant use.

August 2026: Key Recommendations



Improve and expand general healthcare coordination.

Improve screening practices for substance use.

Provide low-barrier diversion, support, and services for individuals in a substance use crisis by implementing emergency department alternative programs.

Address racism, discrimination, and stigma in complex emergency department environments.

Next Steps



- Continue to share OFR recommendations and integrate them into RIDOH's strategic planning.
- Coordinate with the Governor's Overdose Task Force to ensure recommendations are incorporated and aligned with statewide overdose prevention work.
- Support collaboration and funding opportunities to put recommendations into action at the community and state levels.

How You Can Get Involved



Use the OFR as a
Data Source

Suggest Case
Review Topics

Apply for a RIDOH
Short-Term Funding
Opportunity Before
October 30, 2026



Heather Coia, MSW, LICSW

Overdose Fatality Review (OFR) Coordinator

Drug Overdose Prevention Program

Rhode Island Department of Health

Heather.Coia@health.ri.gov



Student Assistance Program

Colleen Judge, LMHC, CSAC
Director of Student Assistance Program

Bianca Carreiro, LICSW
Assistant Director



- 1 Welcome
- 2 Youth Mental Health and Substance Use Trends
- 3 What is the Student Assistance Program?
- 4 Our Impact
- 5 Q&A



Agenda

Rhode Island Youth Mental Health and Substance Use Trends

2026 RI High School SurveyWorks Data



QUESTION

➤ During the past 12 months, did you ever feel so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that you stopped doing some usual activities?

72% 
responded
favorably

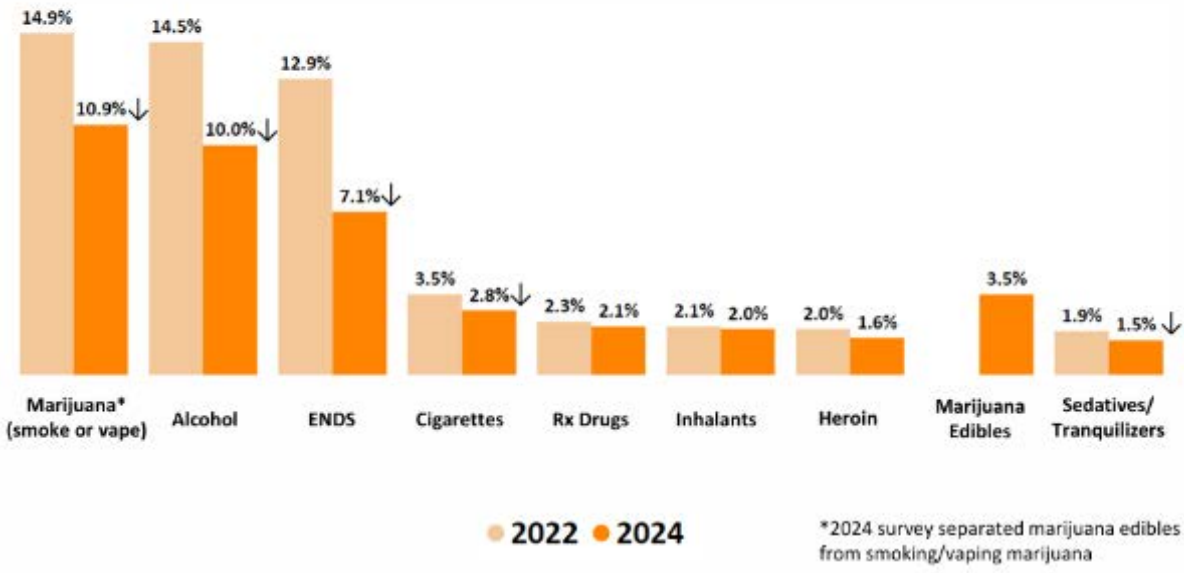
 **2**
from Spring 2025

Rhode Island Youth Mental Health and Substance Use Trends

2024 RI Student Survey

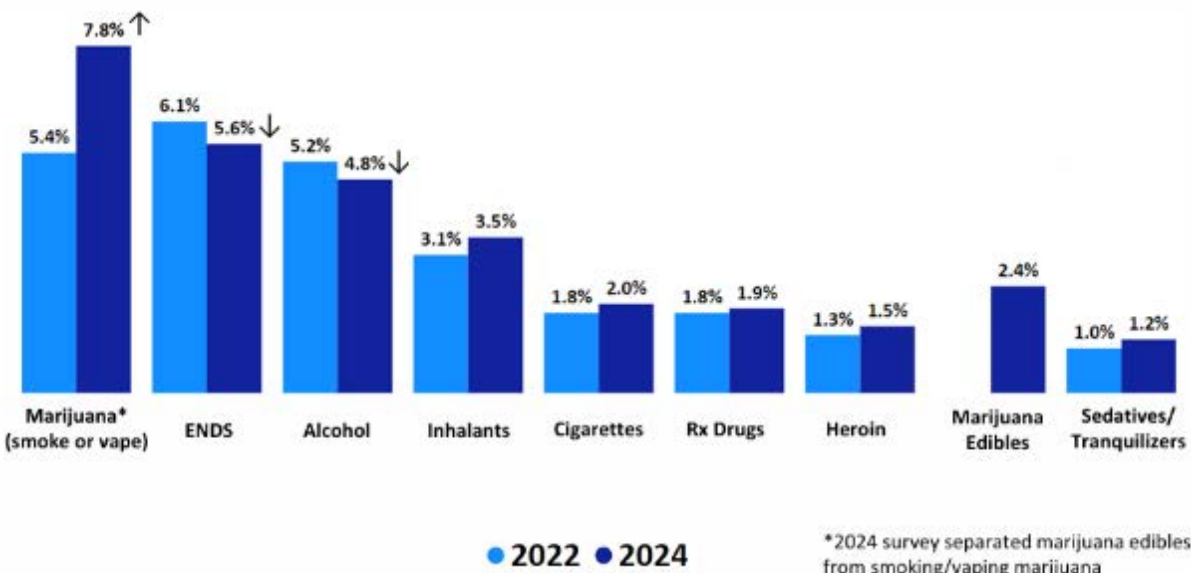
Substance Use

Past 30-Day Use – High School



Substance Use

Past 30-Day Use – Middle School



Core Elements of the Student Assistance Program

Student Assistance Counselors use a combination of evidence-based curricula and motivational interviewing strategies to engage students, build readiness for behavior change, and support prevention goals.

Prevention and Awareness Initiatives

Stanford's SmartTalk Curriculum
Adaptation of "You and Me Together Vape Free"

Screening, Early Intervention, and Referral Process

CRAFT Screener

Evidence-Based Brief Intervention

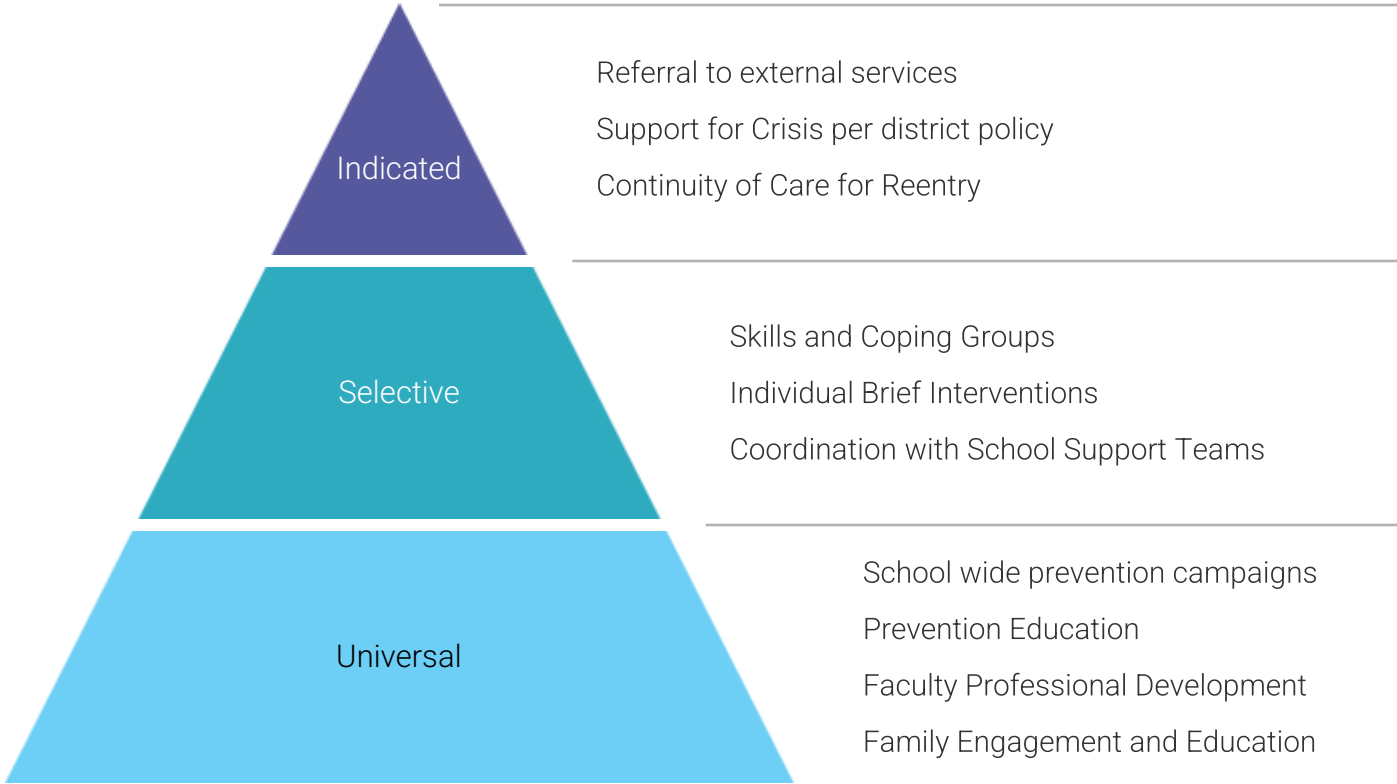
Motivational Interviewing
Healthy Futures
Brief Challenges

Youth Leadership and Peer Prevention

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) Integration in schools

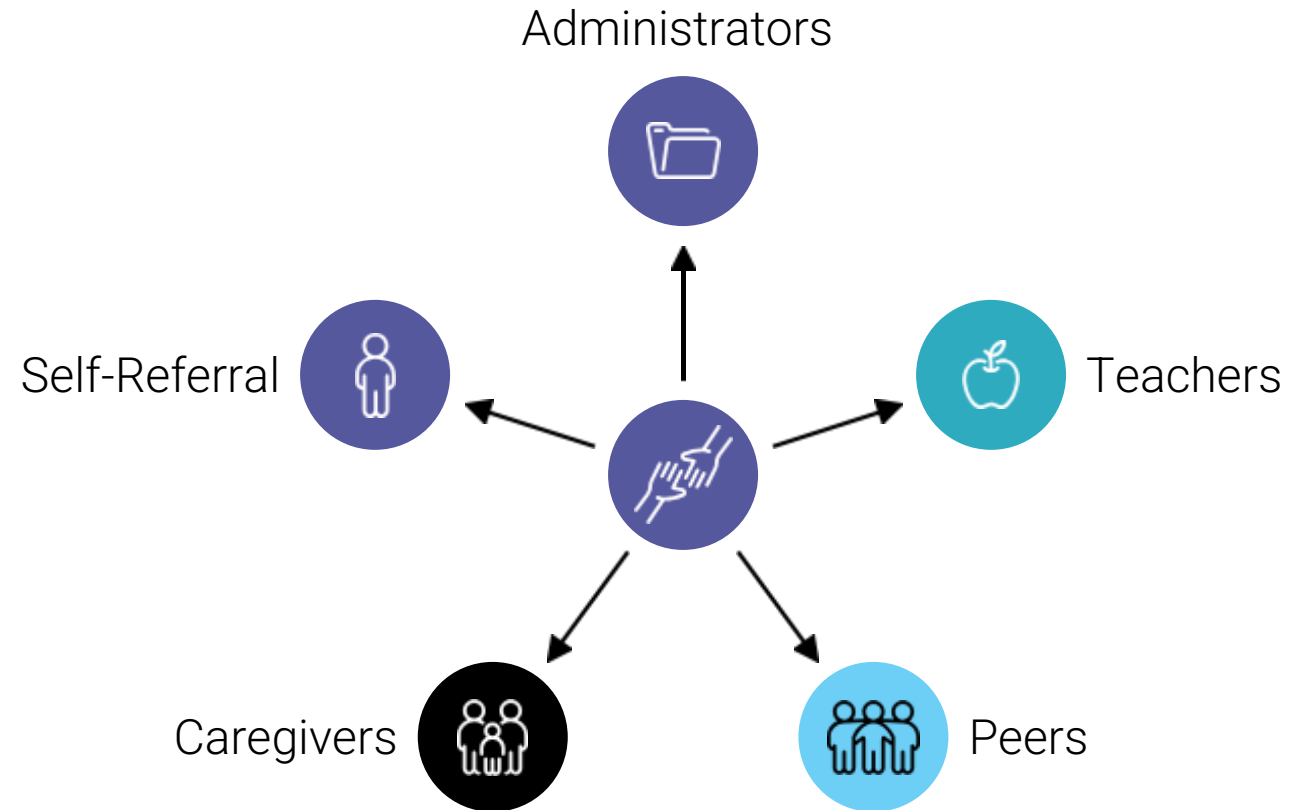
Collaboration with schools, families, and community partners

Our Strategy



SY25-26 Implementation of New Data Collection System to enhance Student Assistance Program continuous improvement.

Multi-Access Referral System



Screening, Identification, and Referral Process

We strengthen early identification efforts through a screening model and a confidential multi-access referral system. This approach ensures that all students receive a consistent, developmentally appropriate screening and assessment process. The system is integrated within the school's MTSS and guided by trauma-informed and evidence-based practices.

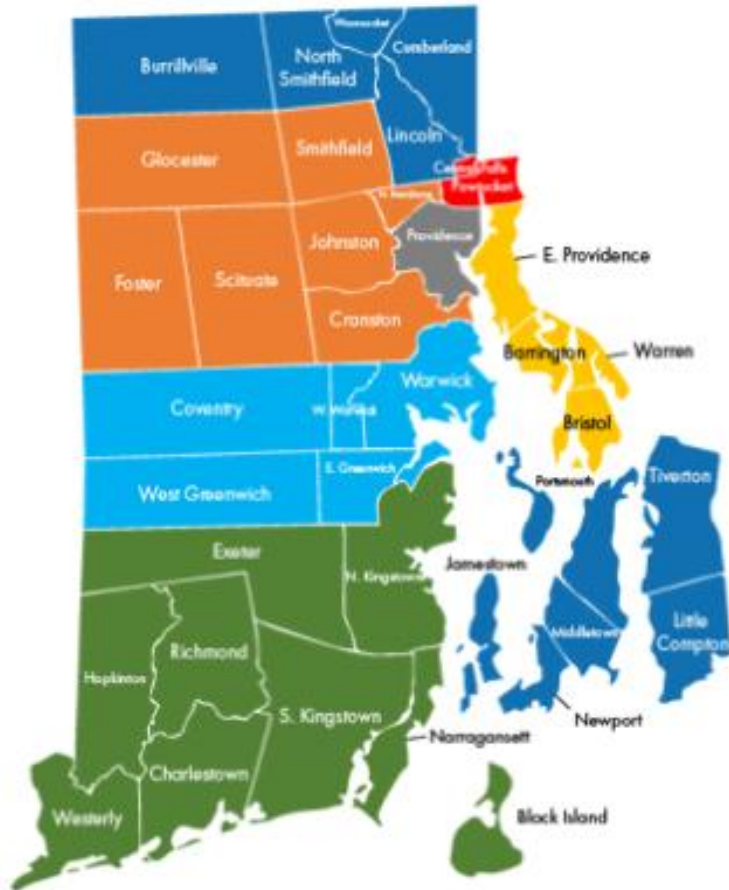
- 1 Identify students with emerging substance use and behavioral health risks
- 2 Ensure timely access to Evidence Based Practices aligned with student's needs related to substance use prevention
- 3 Promote equity by offering multiple confidential pathways into the program



CRAFFT

Columbia Suicide Severity
Rating Scale

Referral to Treatment and Support Services



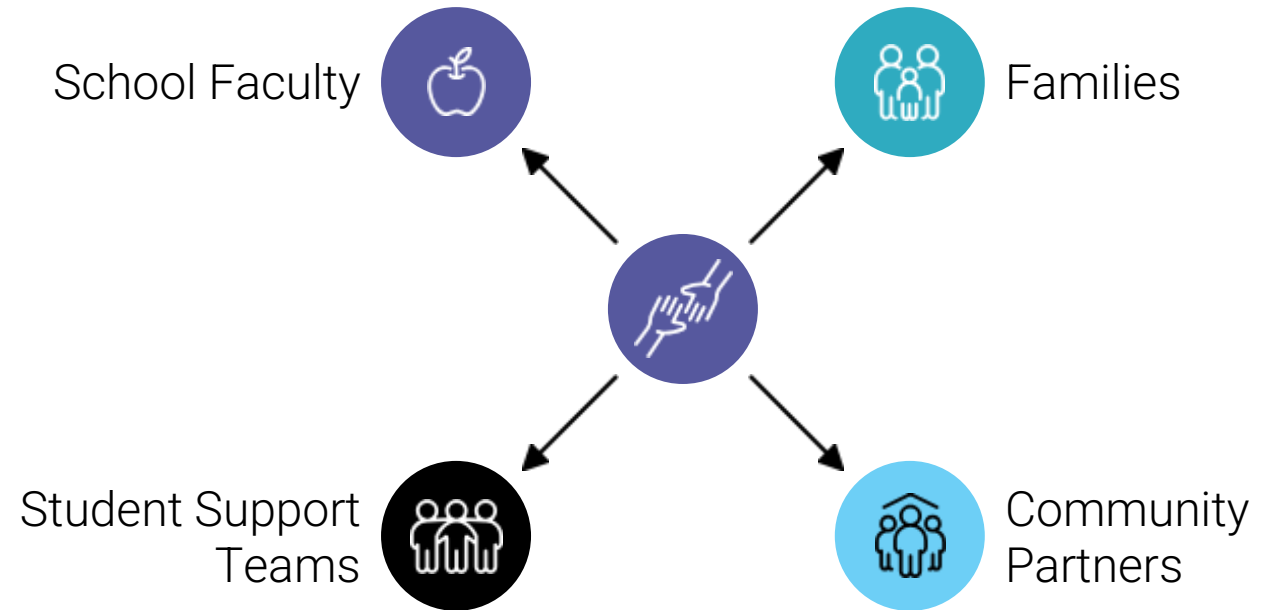
Goal:

To ensure students with significant substance use or behavioral health concerns are connected to appropriate intensive services, while maintaining school-based support through coordination, monitoring, and reintegration planning.

Who:

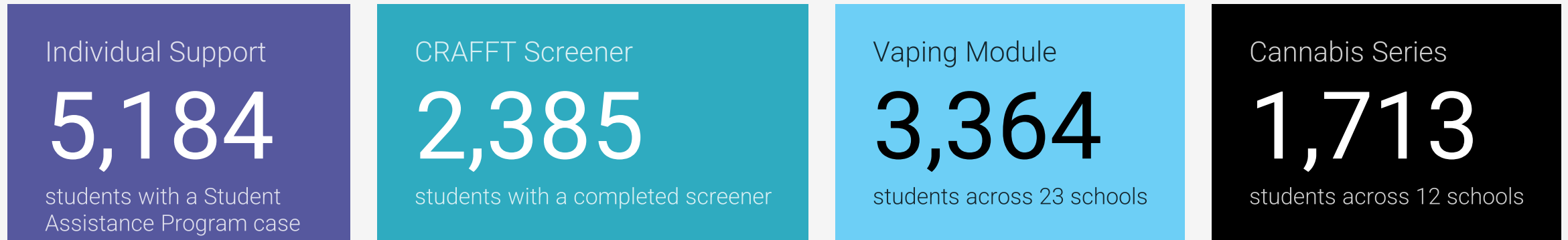
Students demonstrating significant behavioral health concerns or active substance use that require intensive or specialized support beyond the scope of the Student Assistance Program.

Collaboration with Schools, Families, and Community Partners



Student Assistance Program: Reach and Screening

Data Collection from the 2025-2026 School Year



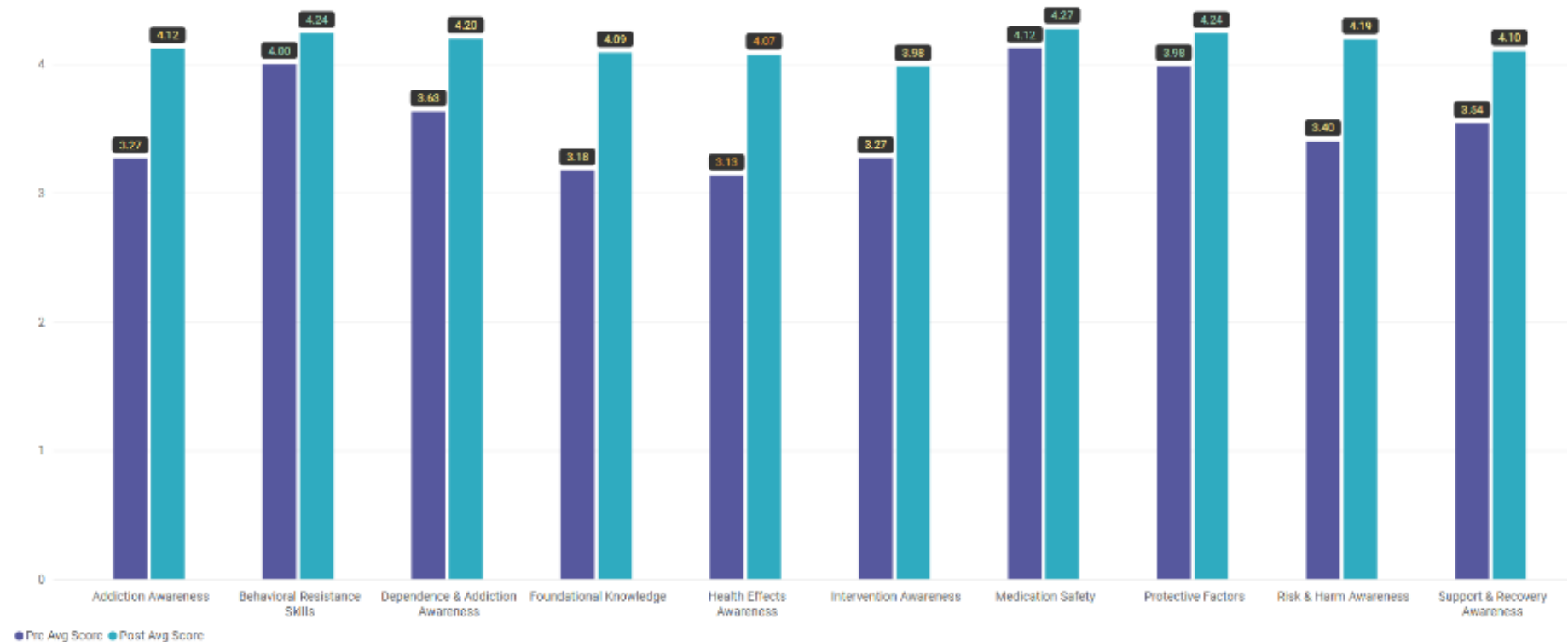
Measures may include the same students; figures should not be added together

SY25-26 Opioid Module Pre/Post Test Data

Students demonstrated higher post-test scores across every measured domain, with the greatest gains in health effects, foundational knowledge, addiction awareness, and risk and harm awareness.

- Delivered to 8th and 10th grade students
- 5,040 unique students received the Opioid Module
- Across 42 schools
- 2,488 pre-tests completed
- 1,485 post-test completed

Improvement across all 10 measured domains



Prevention Where Young People Are

Effective prevention means reaching young people early, in the environment where they spend most of their time: **school**.



Meet the Student Assistance Program Leadership Team



Colleen
Judge



Bianca
Carreiro



Diane
Ferrara



Emlyn
Whipple



Jheneire
Loreus



Kelsey
Daniel



Melly
Bello



Sue
Davis



Q&A

A scenic view of a city skyline across a body of water, likely the Hudson River in New York City. The skyline features several prominent skyscrapers, including the Empire State Building with its green-tinted top. The sky is filled with wispy clouds, and a white contrail from an airplane is visible. In the foreground, there's a grassy area with trees and a paved path. A yellow text box is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Federal Changes Impacting RI Medicaid Overview for Governor's Overdose Task Force

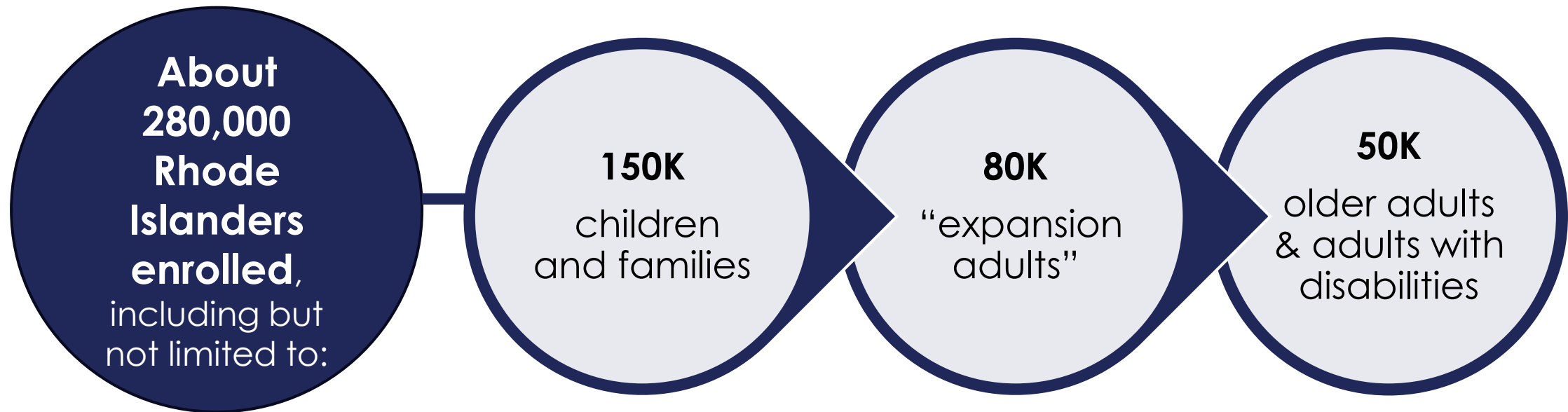
October 14, 2026

Agenda

- Background: Rhode Island Medicaid and H.R. 1
- Overview: What is Changing and When?
 - Changes to Eligibility for Some Non-Citizens
 - Six-Month Renewals and Work Requirements
- Next Steps and Resources
- Questions and Answers

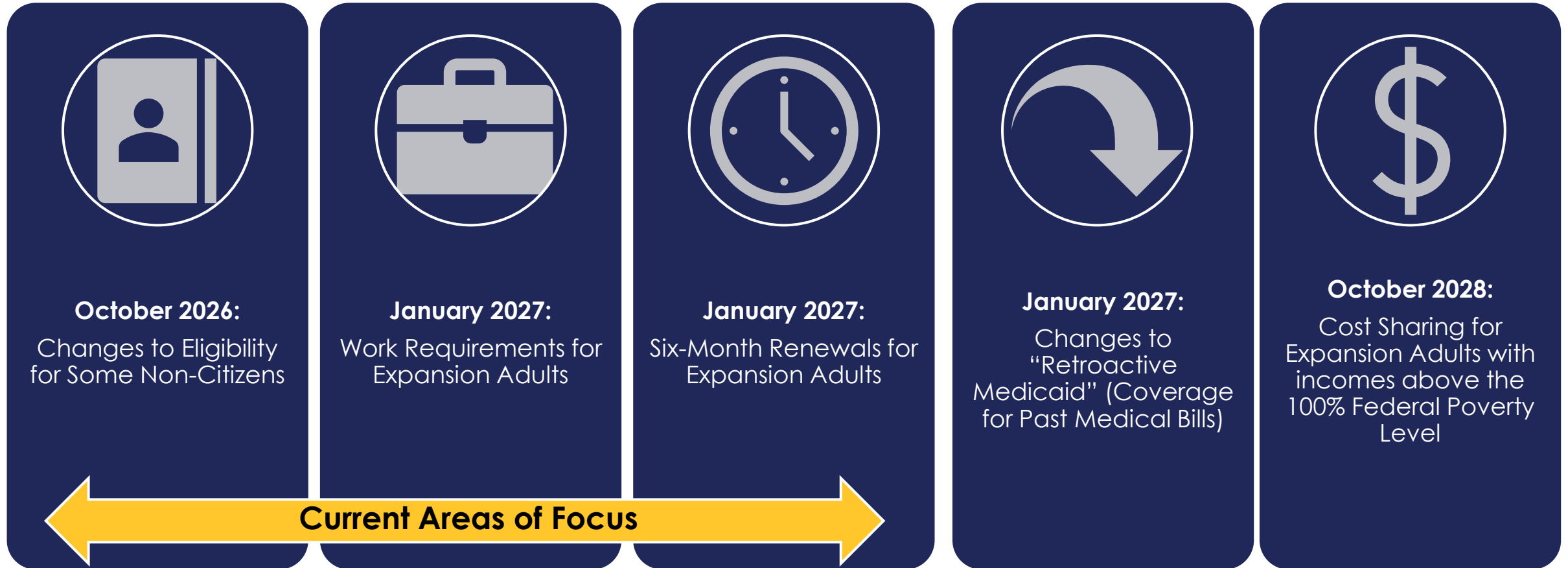
Rhode Island Medicaid At-A-Glance

Medicaid provides health coverage for people with limited incomes who otherwise might not be able to pay for or have access to affordable healthcare.



The expansion program, or “expansion adults,” typically refers to adults age 19 to 64 who are not pregnant, are not a parent/caregiver of a minor child, and do not have Medicare coverage.

Federal Changes Impacting Medicaid



Note: There are additional changes to Medicaid due to H.R. 1; these are the earliest changes impacting members.

Federal Changes to Non-Citizen Eligibility

Changes to Eligibility for Some Non-Citizens Effective October 1, 2026



What's changing?	New federal laws stop Medicaid for some people who are not US citizens.
Who will remain eligible for Rhode Island Medicaid after October 1, 2026?	The following groups of non-citizens <i>are still eligible</i> for Medicaid: • Lawful permanent residents after the five-year wait (if it applies); • Cuban/Haitian entrants; • COFA migrants (i.e., people from Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and Palau); • Children younger than 19; and • Pregnant and postpartum people.
What should partners/providers know?	• Pregnant and postpartum people and children younger than 19 will still have access to Medicaid. • Medicaid can still help pay for emergency medical care.

Example: The Sanchez Family



- **Ana** and **Luis** are immigrants living in Rhode Island.
- They are **not yet green card holders**. They have a **five-year-old son, Mateo**, who is also not yet a US citizen. All three currently receive Medicaid.
- Ana is **pregnant**, expecting their second child in early 2027.
- Effective October 1, 2026:
 - **Luis lost Medicaid coverage**
 - **Ana keeps Medicaid because she is pregnant.**
 - **Mateo keeps Medicaid because he is a child.**
- When Ana has her baby, she will have coverage for 12 months, and the baby will be eligible for Medicaid.

Download and Share Information

staycovered.ri.gov/non-citizens

- Flyer
- Frequently asked questions (FAQs)
- Screener tool and resource guide
- Notice timeline and samples
- Multiple languages: English, Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic, Cape Verdean Creole, Dari, French, Haitian Creole, Khmer, Laotian, Pashto, Russian, Simplified Chinese, and Swahili



Six-Month Renewals and Work Requirements

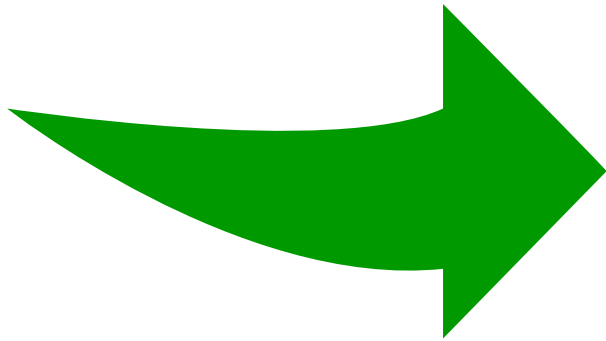
Six-Month Renewals: 2027

What's changing?	Medicaid renewals happen once a year. In 2027, some Medicaid members will need to renew their coverage every six months instead of once a year.
Who will be impacted?	Not everyone on Medicaid. ONLY adults enrolled in the expansion program (adults ages 19 to 64 who are not pregnant, are not a parent/caregiver of a minor child, and do not have Medicare).
Which renewal cohort will first be impacted?	The 3/31/2027 renewal cohort is the first group subject to the six-month requirement. Renewal notices will be mailed on or around 2/1/2027.

Six-Month Renewals: 2027

Passive Renewal (No Action Needed):

- Medicaid has enough information on file to see that the member is still eligible.
- A member's coverage is automatically renewed for six months.
- Medicaid sends the member a Benefits Decision Notice (BDN).
- No additional action needed.



Active Renewal (Action Needed):

- Medicaid does not have enough information to complete the renewal automatically.
- Medicaid sends the member two notices: a yellow Medicaid renewal notice and a white notice asking for additional documents.
- Members must submit requested information to Medicaid so their eligibility can be determined.



Work Requirements: 2027

Impacted Populations

- Expansion adults
- Ages 19 to 64
- Not pregnant
- Not a parent/caregiver of a minor child
- Do not have Medicare

Qualifying Activities

- Income of at least \$580 in a month, OR
- 80 hours of work, community service, and/or work program participation, OR
- Enrollment in an educational program at least half-time.

Exemptions

- There are many exemptions that are federally mandated
- Rhode Island will also offer short-term hardship exemptions, including for inpatient care.

Lookback Period

- **At application:** The month before you applied.
- **At renewal:** Any month since your last eligibility decision.

Who Is Exempt from Work Requirements?

Not everyone on Medicaid will have to meet federal work requirements. Some exemptions are due to:



Age and Benefits: You are younger than 19, age 65 and older, or get Medicare, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), or disability benefits.



Parental and Caregiver Duties:

- Are a parent or legal guardian of a child younger than 19 who lives in your household.
- Are a caregiver to a child younger than 14.
- Are a caregiver of a person of any age with a disability.



Pregnancy: You are pregnant now or were pregnant in the last 12 months.



Health Conditions: You have a condition that makes working difficult.

- Physical, intellectual, or developmental condition.
- Mental health condition or a substance use disorder.
- In a drug or alcohol treatment program.

Reporting Work and Related Activities

Activity/Criteria	Self-Attestation	Data Source
Income of at least \$580 or working at least 80 hours in a month		Employment and wage data
80 hours of community service in a month	✓	
Participate in a work program at east 80 hours in a month	✓	
Enrolled in an education program at least half-time	✓	Enrollment data by mid-2027
Seasonal workers: Average income over the last six months that is at least \$580		Employment and wage data

Reporting Exemptions

Exemption	Self-Attestation	Data Source
Parents, guardians, caregiver relatives, family caregivers of a dependent child younger than age 14 or of a disabled individual	✓	RI Bridges eligibility
People participating in drug/alcohol treatment and/or rehabilitation programs	✓	Claims data
Individuals who are medically frail or have special medical needs, including SUD or mental health condition	✓	Claims data
People who are pregnant or 12 months postpartum	✓	
Described in a mandatory categorically needy eligibility group		RI Bridges

Work Requirements Example: Passive Renewal



Chris

Employment: Part-time retail job

Age: 31

Household: Single, no children.

Monthly income: \$1,280

- 1 Chris works 20 hours a week in retail.
- 2 Ahead of his renewal date, the State verifies that Chris worked 80 hours a month and earned \$1,280 a month.
- 3 Chris receives a **Benefits Decision Notice** in the mail stating his coverage has been renewed for 6 months.
- 4 No additional action is needed. The State will be in touch ahead of Chris' next renewal in 6 months if more information is needed.

✓ **MEETS WORK REQUIREMENTS**

Work Requirements Exemption: SUD Treatment



Tate

Employment: Unemployed

Age: 24

Household: Single, no children.

Monthly income: \$0

- 1 Tate is currently unemployed and **experiencing substance use disorder**.
- 2 RI Medicaid reviews recent claims data and sees that Tate has a Substance Use Disorder diagnosis and **is participating in treatment**.
- 3 Their **participation in treatment** means Tate is **exempt from work requirements**, even though he receives Medicaid through the Expansion Program.
- 4 Tate receives a **Benefits Decision Notice** confirming that his coverage is renewed for 6 months.

Note: If a mental health condition or substance use disorder makes it hard for someone to work, go to school, or volunteer, but they are not participating in treatment, they can also report their condition and qualify for a different exemption.

✓ **EXEMPT FROM WORK REQUIREMENTS**

Download and Share Information

staycovered.ri.gov/work

- Flyer
- Frequently asked questions (FAQs)
- Screener tool
- Social media toolkit
- Poster
- Digital signage
- Multiple languages: English, Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic, Cape Verdean Creole, French, Haitian Creole, Khmer, Laotian, Russian, Simplified Chinese, Swahili

[Order Free Printed Materials](#)

Medicaid work requirements are coming.

Make sure you're prepared.



A new federal law will change Medicaid rules for some Rhode Island adults starting in 2027.

These changes include:

- Work requirements
- Medicaid renewals every 6 months

Who will be affected by these changes?

Medicaid work requirements may apply to you if you get your coverage through the Medicaid expansion program. Medicaid expansion provides coverage for low-income adults ages 19–64.

If you do not meet the work requirements and do not qualify for one of the exemptions listed below, your Medicaid coverage may end.

Who will not be affected by these changes?

Work requirements do not apply to you if you:

- Are younger than 19 or older than 64
- Are a parent or legal guardian of a child younger than 19 who lives in your household
- Are a caregiver to a child younger than 14
- Are a caregiver of a person of any age with a disability
- Have a physical, intellectual, developmental, or mental health condition that makes it difficult to work, attend school, or volunteer
- Have a serious or complex medical condition that makes it difficult to work, attend school, or volunteer
- Are in a drug or alcohol treatment program
- Are pregnant now or were pregnant in the last year
- Are Native American or Alaska Native
- Were in jail or prison within the last three months
- Were in foster care when you turned 18
- Are a veteran with a total (100%) disability rating
- Are receiving TANF and meeting TANF work requirements
- Are receiving SNAP and meeting SNAP work requirements
- Are enrolled in Medicare, getting SSI/SSDI, or disability benefits

Next Steps and Resources

Remind Members: Update Your Information

Members can update their accounts so they don't miss critical notices.



Online: Create an account or log in at HealthyRhode.ri.gov or by using the HealthyRhode mobile app.



By phone: Members enrolled with a health plan (Neighborhood, Tufts, or United) can call the number on the back of their insurance card.



In person: Staff at DHS offices around the state can assist members in person. Find an office: dhs.ri.gov/about-us/dhs-offices.

Members can also opt in to get text messages and digital notices from Medicaid.

Guidance for Providers



- ✓ Ensure Accurate Diagnoses on Claims
- ✓ Strengthen Eligibility Verification
- ✓ Maintain Clear Sliding Fee Scales
- ✓ Refresh Resource and Referral Lists
- ✓ Update Staff Training on Benefits Navigation

Work requirements and six-month renewals will be federally required for expansion adults in 2027.

Not everyone
will be
affected.

No
documentation
required for
most
exemptions in
2027.

Self-attestation
accepted in
most cases;
instructions in
notices.

Members can
appeal and
re-apply.



BE READY. STAY COVERED.

- Access shareable resources: staycovered.ri.gov/updates
- Sign up for EOHHS's Community Newsletter: bit.ly/EOHHS-news
- Email us at ohhs.communications@ohhs.ri.gov



Thank You

Questions?

Public Comment

RHODE
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