

Urgent message from BCBSAZ Health Choice's CEO Action Needed Now to Keep Your Medicaid Benefits



Shawn Nau,
CEO
BCBSAZ
Health Choice

It could be the most important phone call you will make all year.

Before the pandemic, Medicaid enrollees were required to update their eligibility information once per year. Once COVID-19 became a Public Health Emergency (PHE), checking renewal eligibility

was put on a pause. That meant anyone on Medicaid during this time kept their coverage even if no longer eligible.

Arizona's Medicaid program, the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS), will resume checking renewal status starting on April 1, 2023.

If you have not recently updated your information (current mailing address, current income, household information, etc.) with AHCCCS, now is the time to do so, and we can help!

We have a team of bilingual BCBSAZ Health Choice Community Assistors on standby to help, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at **1-844-390-8935**.

You can also visit **HealthEArizonaPlus.gov** to update your information.

At BCBSAZ Health Choice, we care about your health and well-being and look forward to keeping you covered.

Thank you,
Shawn Nau

BCBSAZ Health Choice

Only AHCCCS Plan to Receive Prestigious Quality Rating

BCBSAZ Health Choice has received additional Health Plan Accreditation from the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) for its Health Plan Medicaid and Medicare Advantage modules.

BCBSAZ Health Choice is Arizona's only AHCCCS health plan to pass these rigorous standards. BCBSAZ Health Choice received a perfect score of 100% for the Medicaid module. NCQA exists to improve the quality of healthcare. NCQA Health Plan Accreditation evaluates organizations providing managed healthcare services.

You can have confidence knowing your health plan receives high ratings.



AT A GLANCE –

benefits of physical activity (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services)

Benefits for Children

- Reduces risk of depression
- Improves aerobic fitness
- Improves muscular fitness
- Improves bone health
- Promotes favorable body composition
- Improves attention and some measures of academic performance (with school physical activity programs)

Benefits for Adults

- Lowers risk of high blood pressure
- Lowers risk of stroke
- Improves aerobic fitness
- Improves mental health
- Improves cognitive function
- Reduces arthritis symptoms
- Prevents weight gain

Walking Is a Great Way to Stay Healthy

**Check-in with Dr. Mark Carroll,
BCBSAZ Health Choice Chief Medical Officer**

Walking regularly can add years to your life. According to the National Institutes of Health, walking reduces the risk of heart disease, diabetes, weight gain, and high blood pressure. And there is no gym cost, no fancy clothes to buy, and no special equipment needed – except some comfortable shoes.

Sounds great, doesn't it? So why don't many of us walk more?

Because change in our routines is harder than it seems. That's why Dr. Carroll offers some ideas to help make change easier.

"If I drive to the grocery store," Dr. Carroll shares, "I try to pick a parking spot further away from the front door. Then, when I get home, I sometimes carry one bag at a time inside, so that it takes more trips. It's amazing what a little extra walking can do for how I feel."

Walking is considered good exercise for both beginners and athletes because a person can go as slow or as fast as they need. It is recommended as part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' weekly goals for exercise: two and a half hours for adults and at least one hour for children and teenagers.

"I try not to see exercise as a chore – something I'm supposed to do. Instead, I look for excuses to move so I feel better, such as spending time with my family, or walking our dog. For me, walking has become a habit that I miss when I'm not able to do it."

Dr. Carroll wants to remind all BCBSAZ Health Choice members to be sure to check with their primary care provider before starting any new exercise program. If you do not have a doctor, please call Member Services at **1-800-322-8670, TTY: 711**, and a representative will help you find one. We are open Monday – Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (except holidays).



Treat Your Body Like Your Car

Annual Checkups Help Keep Things Running Smoothly

Most of us know when our cars are due for an oil change. And we know what happens if we don't change the oil. The car will likely start having issues.

The same is true with our bodies. So, we urge BCBSAZ Health Choice members to schedule an annual well-visit with their primary care provider (PCP). Just like a check-in with the mechanic, your annual well-visit can help prevent future problems.

During your annual checkup your PCP will check you over from head to toe. They'll make sure your medications and shots are up to date. They will also talk about any medical concerns you may have.

They'll also talk about scheduling yearly preventive screenings. Depending on your age, gender, and needs, yearly

screenings can help detect breast or colon cancer and other health issues.

"What you don't know, can hurt you. Screenings and early treatment are key to getting ahead of a health problem, such as heart disease or cancer," says Ellen Lewis, Staff Vice President of Clinical Operations for BCBSAZ Health Choice.

"Diseases cause the most harm when left undetected. If we know what's happening, a treatment plan can begin before things become harder to treat. Early detection is the key to treating all health issues," Lewis adds. That's why yearly checkups matter.

Lewis also wants to remind BCBSAZ Health Choice members those annual physicals, routine blood work, and screenings are no cost to members.

And remember, screenings aren't just for adults. They're just as important for children as they grow into teenagers. Screenings are advised during regular wellness visits for all children aged 9, 18, and 30 months. And kids aged 3 to 20 should also have annual checkups.

Contact your PCP today to schedule your (and your family's) annual wellness appointments. If you do not have a PCP, we can assist you. Just call Member Services at **1-800-322-8670, TTY: 711**. We are open Monday – Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (except holidays).

Thank you for being a valued BCBSAZ Health Choice member.



THANK YOU

for being a valued
BCBSAZ Health Choice member.

Participate in 2023 BCBSAZ Health Choice Healthy Rewards Program

Earn Gift Cards

We want to remind our members about the BCBSAZ Health Choice Healthy Rewards program.

We offer gift cards to members for completing screenings for themselves and for their children and teens to be sure everyone is in tip-top shape.

Check out all the easy ways you can be rewarded, just for keeping you and your family healthy.



Babies, children, and teens:

As a parent or guardian who takes time to schedule Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT) visits, you will keep your little ones healthy and can add a little to your wallet for helping your kiddos stay well.

- Well-child visits – **up to \$150 yearly**
 - **\$25 per visit** up to six visits during 0-15 months of age
 - **\$25 for one visit** during 16-30 months of age
- Child and Adolescent Well-Care, 3 to 21 – **\$25 annually**
- Trip to the dentist for children 2 to 21 – **\$25 once per year**

Moms-to-be:

- Prenatal visit (within the first trimester) – **\$25 annually**
- Postpartum (within 7 to 84 days after delivery) – **\$25 annually**

Additional activities and screenings:

- Breast Cancer Screening, ages 50 to 74, annually as long as the last screening occurred within the last two years – **\$50**
- Completion of Health Risk Assessment ages 3 to 17 – **\$25 annually**



To learn more about program guidelines and how to earn rewards, visit **[HealthChoiceAZ.com/HealthyRewardsProgram](https://www.healthchoiceaz.com/HealthyRewardsProgram)** or you can call BCBSAZ Health Choice Member Services at **1-800-322-8670, TTY: 711**, Monday – Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. There is also a Healthy Rewards program for BCBSAZ Health Choice Pathway (HMO D-SNP) members.

Unconscious Bias: Ways to Keep It out of Your Doctor's Office

Have you ever left your doctor's office and felt as if they were not hearing or seeing you? Did you think that this may be due to the clothes that you were wearing, the way you looked, or your beliefs? This may be due to unconscious bias by the doctor's office.

Unconscious bias happens when someone's brain does not look at a unique situation. Rather, they take information based on previous experiences or what they think they know. This affects a person's attitude, without being aware of it. And it happens in healthcare.

Age, gender, weight, sex, and religion are a few traits that play into provider and patient bias. However, patients' and providers' intents are to give and get the best care possible. Stress, time limits, and other factors can contribute to people making false assumptions. They also may not look at a patient's care as unique. That is when unconscious bias occurs. Sadly, assumptions about the cause of a person's symptoms may be made.

This can lead to incorrect ways to treat what is wrong. This can also lead to patients not having confidence in their doctors or their treatment plan.

Many underserved communities are impacted by unconscious bias. LGBTQ patients may not get the care that they need due to stigmas against them. At the same time, patients may feel a bias against gay doctors.

Unconscious bias is very difficult to confront. Both providers and patients need to understand their own bias and how it can negatively impact them.

BCBSAZ Health Choice trains providers and team members to be aware of unconscious bias. There are things you can do before and during an appointment.

- Think – Consider what your own preferences and beliefs are about different groups.
- Speak Up – During your doctor's visit, let them know if they might be making a negative or false assumption based on your characteristics (age, race, religion, sex).
- Pay Attention – Recognize what your own biased thoughts are before you act on them.

BCBSAZ Health Choice Is Committed to Clear and Understandable Communication:

It may be hard to understand your care when English is not your first language, or if you have difficulty hearing. We have interpreter services available to you when communicating with Health Plan staff. Your provider can help you if you need these services during your healthcare appointment.

- Oral translation
- Written translation
- Sign language
- TYY/TDD services



As always, we are here to help. You can reach Member Services at **1-800-322-8670**, **TTY: 711**, and a representative will help you. We are open Monday – Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (except holidays).

Friend, dragon, snowflake, blonde, goodfella, and lollipop. These everyday words won't raise any red flags when heard by friends or loved ones. But these are some of the names for fentanyl.

Fentanyl is the leading cause of preventable death for people aged 14 to 44. And children under age 14 are dying from fentanyl at a faster rate than any other age group in America.

The rise in the use of fentanyl has been stunning. The statistics are sobering. In 2020 alone, more than 2,000 Arizonans overdosed on fentanyl. Currently, more teenagers are dying from overdoses than from car crashes, suicide, and COVID combined.

Opioids, in general, are a problem as well. The Arizona Department of Health Services reports that, between 2017 to 2021, over 31,000 people overdosed on opioids in Arizona. During that same time, 3,800 Arizonans died of an opioid overdose.

And it's not slowing down. Fentanyl is flooding Arizona. The Drug Enforcement Agency stated that 2022 was a record year. It intercepted 379 million fentanyl doses that year. This is more than enough to kill every American. Here in Arizona, in the final weeks of December, a combined 2.5 million pills were seized in just two stops outside Nogales.

But this is not just a border issue. Or something that only hurts people we see as drug addicts. It's not an issue that just involves someone else's child or loved one. It impacts all of us. In fact, just one pill can kill. That is what happened to Misty's daughter Kaylie.

Misty worked as an RN in the ICU for a local hospital system. Her daughter Kaylie, a vibrant 17-year-old high school student from San Tan, had been active in sports and cheer during her younger years. Because of COVID, school had switched to being online. Kaylie frequently did her homework late in the evening and woke up midmorning.

**“CURRENTLY MORE TEENAGERS
ARE DYING FROM OVERDOSES
THAN FROM CAR CRASHES,
SUICIDE, AND COVID COMBINED.”**

ONE PILL

Kaylie and her mother had always talked about everything. They had the hard conversations about drugs, alcohol, and peer pressure and Misty would check Kaylie's phone and social media for any warning signs.

April 12, 2021, changed everything. The night before was like hundreds before it. Kaylie and her mother had dinner. When Kaylie said she was going upstairs to do homework at 9:30 p.m., she gave her mom a kiss and said, “I love you.” Misty went to bed knowing her child was home, in her room where she thought she was safe.

The next morning, Misty texted Kaylie to ask if she was up. There was no response. But it was early and not unusual for Kaylie to still be sleeping. At 11:30 a.m. she again texted Kaylie to see if she wanted to go shopping. When Kaylie didn't respond back, Misty knew something was wrong.





CAN KILL

Misty and her son broke into Kaylie's room. They found Kaylie lying on her stomach with the laptop open in front of her. It was too late. Kaylie was dead.

Kaylie had some recent dental work and was given pain medications. She had also been complaining of back pain. Misty believes a friend on Snapchat offered her daughter what was supposed to be a Percocet. Instead, Kaylie got a fake pill that was pure fentanyl.

Fentanyl can be found in a variety of forms. In addition to pills, there are patches, vape pens, lozenges, lollipops, tablets, and even eye drops. It can also be inhaled as a nasal spray or injected.

Frequently, people look to friends and social media for Percocet, Ativan, Xanax, and Adderall. But they are getting counterfeit pills that are pure fentanyl or laced with it. It just takes a small amount of fentanyl to kill.

Misty says if there is one thing she would tell others, it would be to change how we talk about drugs. Drugs are everywhere, in our neighborhoods and schools, and on social media. They're no longer just in bad neighborhoods, sold by dangerous-looking people. Today, you can get drugs from friends or friends of friends.

And hard drugs don't require a needle to use. Often, they're pills, typically from a prescription at first. As the prescription runs out, the need can remain.

The answer is awareness, education, and involvement in our everyday lives and in the community. We must remove judgement, and the fear of talking about drugs.

Misty said she had a good relationship with her daughter. They had conversations about drinking and drugs. But they never talked about how just one pill can kill. Even if you got it from a friend. It's such a tragic way for life to end.

MEDICINE TO REVERSE OVERDOSES AVAILABLE

Narcan, also called naloxone, can reverse an overdose. You can get it at no cost to you and without a prescription. Just ask your local pharmacist for more information.

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Don't Wait – Update

If you have not recently updated your information (current mailing address, current income, household information, etc.) with AHCCCS, now is the time to do so and we can help! Call our bilingual BCBSAZ Health Choice Community Assistors.



Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
at **1-844-390-8935**



You can also visit **HealthEArizonaPlus.gov** to update your information.

Your Member Handbook Is a Wealth of Resources

Did you know you can find the following information in your Member Handbook healthchoiceaz.com/members/member-handbooks and our website at healthchoiceaz.com?

- Your Rights and Responsibilities (including Privacy and Confidentiality Rights)
- How to find a Specialist
- Interpreter Services; and availability of materials in alternate formats
- Quality Improvement Programs and Utilization of Services
- How to File a Grievance or Appeal an Adverse Decision
- Advance Directives (End of Life Decisions)

If you have questions or concerns about any of the above items, please contact Member Services at **1-800-322-8670, TTY: 711**, and a representative will help you. Monday – Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (except holidays).



Mental Health and Substance Use Resources

Mental health matters to BCBSAZ Health Choice. We do not support substance use stigmas. There should be no shame in seeking help. The success behind our Office of Individual and Family Affairs (OIFA) program is the fact that our team members understand where you are because they have once been in your shoes as a patient, family member, or both.

Mental health and substance use issues are conditions that can be acute or chronic in nature. It is no different than when we treat a member with heart disease or other health challenges they may be facing. BCBSAZ Health Choice casts aside stereotypes.

The BCBSAZ Health Choice OIFA team wants to be sure you are aware of the wide variety of community services available to you and your family.

Please visit our website to learn more:
healthchoiceaz.com/members/the-office-of-individual-and-family-affairs/

Need Help Getting Started on Healthy Habits? Building a Buddy Network Can Help!

We all get told what we can do to improve our health from our primary care provider, however sometimes getting started is hard. The good news is medical professionals – such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – find that building your own support groups, referred to as social supports, can often help in not only starting, but maintaining healthy habits.

When you work out with a partner, you're likely to:

1. Feel more motivated. When you and your buddy encourage each other, you'll work harder (and get better results!). And there's nothing wrong with a little friendly competition.
2. Be more adventurous. It's easier to try new things with a buddy. You may just find an activity you love, one that feels more like fun and less like a workout.
3. Be more consistent. When someone else is counting on you to show up, you won't want to let them down.

If you feel like you may not have the social supports needed to get started, here are some great ideas on how to build them up.

- Attend community activities
- Join groups or clubs in your community or building
- Attend religious services
- Volunteer
- Talk to family or neighbors

Remember, there is nothing wrong with reaching out to connect with others for your health – in fact – you'll help those around you stay healthy, too.



STAY COVERED!

Medicaid renewals were paused due to COVID-19, but they're back! Don't wait – update!



BCBSAZ Health Choice members: Make sure we have your current information. Call us Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at **1-844-390-8935**.

You can also visit **HealthEARizonaPlus.gov** to update your information.

Important Phone Numbers:

BCBSAZ Health Choice

Member Services:

1-800-322-8670, TTY: 711,

Monday – Friday (except holidays),
8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

BCBSAZ Health Choice

Nurse Advice Line:

1-855-458-0622, available 24 hours
a day, seven days a week

BCBSAZ Health Choice

Transportation to medical appointments:

602-386-3447

Please call 72 hours or three days
before your appointment to schedule a
ride. The transportation line is available
24 hours a day, seven days a week.

ARIZONA AND NATIONAL 24-HOUR SUICIDE AND CRISIS HOTLINES:



Arizona Crisis Hotline:

1-844-534-HOPE (4673)

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:

988 (call or text)

National Substance Use and Disorder Issues Referral and Treatment Hotline:

1-800-662-4357

Text:

Text the word "HOME" to **741741**

Veterans Crisis Line:

1-800-273-8255

If you or a loved one are having a medical
emergency, call **911**.

BCBSAZ Health Choice complies with applicable Federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex.

English: ATTENTION: If you speak a language other than English, language assistance services, free of charge, are available to you. Call **1-800-322-8670, TTY: 711**.

Español (Spanish): ATENCIÓN: si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al **1-800-322-8670, TTY: 711**.

Diné Bizaad [Navajo]: Díí baa akó nínízin: Díí saad bee yáníłti'go Diné Bizaad, saad bee áká'ánída'áwo'déé', t'áá jik'eh, éí ná hóló, kóji' hódíłnih **1-800-322-8670, TTY: 711**.

All health information is for educational purposes only, and is not a substitute for medical treatment, advice, or diagnosis by a healthcare professional. Talk to your doctor before undertaking any medical treatment, exercise program, or dietary change.

Contract services are funded under contract with the State of Arizona.
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