

Talking Points: Clarification of Status of Medicaid and FoodShare Benefits (January 2025)

Intended audience

The talking points below are meant for use by staff who work with Medicaid and FoodShare members, as well as parties interested in those programs. This includes personnel at DHS, income maintenance (IM) and Tribal agencies, ForwardHealth Member Services, ForwardHealth Provider Services, the HMO enrollment broker, the NEMT service provider, and any other entities that may need to relay high-level information related to concerns about the status of Medicaid and FoodShare services in light of recent federal policy communications.

Background and Instructions (not for sharing/distribution)

On January 27, 2025, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued a memo to federal agencies pausing the release of federal funds for a range of programs. The original memo contained a footnote excluding Social Security and Medicare. The OMB on January 28 indicated Medicaid and SNAP programs were excluded. On January 29, the White House rescinded the January 27 memo, however the White House has also made comments that the spending freeze itself was not rescinded. The underlying effort to freeze federal funds is the subject of ongoing multiple lawsuits. During this period of uncertainty regarding federal actions, we want to provide an update on the current status of access to benefits for Wisconsinites.

The broad reach of the January 27 memo has made headlines and many people have questions. Some members who contacted DHS asked whether they should cancel health care appointments or whether their FoodShare benefits would come in February. Meeting such calls with respect and empathy for their concerns is important.

In response, it is important that DHS clarify what we know as clearly as possible, speaking directly to the issues of primary concern. Staff, call centers, and other messengers should use the language in this document as much as possible, as repetition of the same wording reinforces messaging.

If a member, provider, or other interested party has specific questions related to a program or benefit not covered by these talking points, the staff involved should record the person's contact information and their question, and then escalate the query to leadership. **Staff should avoid speculating on anything on which they may be unsure.**

Talking points

Text in *red italics* is meant for explanation/instruction for the call centers and not for reading out loud.

- People have been hearing a lot of interpretations about how programs like Medicaid and FoodShare are being affected by recent actions taken at the federal level. We know uncertainty around such critical benefits makes people understandably concerned.
- To be clear: at this time, Wisconsin's Medicaid and FoodShare programs are continuing to serve the Wisconsinites who rely on them for health care and food benefits.
 - Members should continue to get the health care and services they need.
 - Members can use the FoodShare benefits available on their QUEST cards. February FoodShare benefits are scheduled to go on cards as usual.
 - Care providers should continue to serve members.
- Wisconsin will continue to monitor developments at the federal level and work to serve the best interests of the people of our state.

We will share information about changes or developments related to these programs on our member news pages on the DHS website. You can give them the URLs (below) or recommend they search for FoodShare news or Wisconsin Medicaid news in their favorite search engine:

- *Medicaid:* dhs.wi.gov/medicaidnews
- *FoodShare:* dhs.wi.gov/fsnews

Use this additional language when speaking to providers/health plans/agencies:

- Wisconsin's ForwardHealth Portal has continued to be available.
 - Providers are able to check member eligibility, get policy information, and submit claims for payment as usual.
 - Wisconsin's Medicaid program will continue to make payments to providers, managed care organizations, and other agencies that work with us to serve our members.