



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

HHS in the NEWS

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January 2024 Topics:

- **Governor Abbott, HHSC Announce Medicaid, CHIP Postpartum Coverage Extension**
- **January Declared Human Trafficking Prevention Month**
- **HHSC Encourages Cervical Cancer Screenings**
- **El Paso SSLC Cuts Ribbon on New Sports Complex**
- **DSHS Launches New Virus Dashboard**

Governor Abbott, HHSC Announce Medicaid, CHIP Postpartum Coverage Extension

[Feds approve 12 months of Medicaid coverage for low-income Texas moms](#)

Karen Brooks Harper
Texas Tribune
January 17, 2024

[Feds approve 12 months of Medicaid coverage for low-income Texas moms](#)

Karen Brooks Harper
KIII-TV
January 17, 2024

[Postpartum Medicaid extension for Texans goes into effect in March](#)

Elena Rivera
KERA
January 17, 2024

[Feds Approve Texas' Plan to Expand Medicaid to Postpartum Moms](#)

Maggie Q. Thompson
Austin Chronicle
January 17, 2024



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[Medicaid coverage for Texas mothers to increase to 12 months postpartum after federal sign-off](#)

Taylor Goldenstein
Houston Chronicle
January 17, 2024

[Governor Abbott, HHSC Announce Medicaid, CHIP Postpartum Coverage Extension To 12 Months](#)

Gilbert Rodriguez
Texas Insider
January 18, 2024

[Medicaid, CHIP postpartum coverage in Texas extended from 2 months to 1 year](#)

Juliana Russ
KXAN-TV
January 18, 2024

[Federal government approves 1 year of Medicaid coverage for Texas mothers](#)

Hannah Norton
Community Impact Newspaper
January 18, 2024

[Texas Health and Human Services Commission extends children's health insurance](#)

KDBC-TV
January 17, 2024

[Texas expands postpartum Medicaid coverage to 12 months for low-income mothers](#)

Margo Lepe
KFOX-TV
January 22, 2024

[Feds approve 12 months of Medicaid coverage for low-income Texas moms](#)



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Karen Brooks Harper
KRGV-TV
January 17, 2024

[Feds approve Medicaid for Texas mothers up to 12 months after birth beginning March 1](#)

Nicole Villalpando
Corpus Christi Caller-Times
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[Feds approve 12 months of Medicaid coverage for low-income Texas moms](#)

Karen Brooks Harper
KSCC-TV
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[Medicaid, CHIP postpartum coverage in Texas extended from 2 months to 1 year](#)

Julianna Russ
Concho Valley Homepage
January 18, 2024

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Karen Brooks Harper
KVUE-TV
January 18, 2024

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Nicole Villalpando
Austin American-Statesman
January 22, 2024

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Karen Brooks Harper
News4SA.com
January 17, 2024



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Karen Brooks Harper
FOX San Antonio
January 17, 2024

[Feds approve 12 months of Medicaid coverage for low-income Texas moms](#)

Karen Brooks Harper
KAGS-TV
January 17, 2024

[Feds approve 12 months of Medicaid coverage for low-income Texas moms](#)

Karen Brooks Harper
KPRC-TV
January 17, 2024

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Karen Brooks Harper
KXXV-TV
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[Feds approve Medicaid for Texas mothers up to 12 months after birth beginning March 1](#)

Nicole Villalpando
San Angelo Standard Times
January 22, 2024

[Feds approve Medicaid for Texas mothers up to 12 months after birth beginning March 1](#)

Nicole Villalpando
Abilene Reporter News
January 22, 2024

[Feds approve Medicaid for Texas mothers up to 12 months after birth beginning March 1](#)

Nicole Villalpando



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Wichita Falls Times Record
January 22, 2024

[Feds approve Medicaid for Texas mothers up to 12 months after birth beginning March 1](#)

Nicole Villalpando
Lubbock Avalanche-Journal
January 22, 2024

Governor Abbott Declares January Human Trafficking Month

[Texas declares January Human Trafficking Prevention Month](#)

Kelsey Thompson
KXAN-TV – Austin
January 3, 2024

[Abbott recognizes January 2024 as Human Trafficking Prevention Month](#)

Odessa American
January 3, 2024

[Governor Abbott Recognizes January 2024 As Human Trafficking Prevention Month](#)

Brownwood News
January 3, 2024

[Governor Abbott recognizes January 2024 as Human Trafficking Prevention month](#)

MyParisTexas.com
January 4, 2024

[January is Human Trafficking Prevention Month in Texas](#)

Yantis Green
San Angelo Live
January 4, 2024



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[Human Trafficking Prevention Month; last year approximately 80 survivors were helped in Abilene](#)

Karina Hollingsworth
KXTX-TV Abilene
January 4, 2024

[Gov. Abbott Recognizes January 2024 As Human Trafficking Prevention Month](#)

Athens Daily Review
January 9, 2024

[Gov. Recognizes January 2024 as Human Trafficking Prevention Month](#)

Texas Border Business
January 4, 2024

[Gov. Abbott Recognizes January 2024 As Human Trafficking Prevention Month](#)

CNHI News
January 9, 2024

HHSC Encourages Cervical Cancer Screenings

[Encouraging Cancer Screenings During Cervical Health Awareness Month](#)

Mega Doctor News (MDN)
January 8, 2024

[Texas Health Commission Urges Women To Prioritize Cervical Cancer Screenings During National Awareness Month](#)

Irving Weekly
January 8, 2024

[HHSC encourages cancer screenings during Cervical Health Awareness Month](#)

Victoria Reyes
KAMR-TV
January 8, 2024



[HHSC encourages cancer screenings during Cervical Health Awareness Month](#)

Jacksonville Progress
January 16, 2024

[HHSC encourages cancer screenings during Cervical Health Awareness Month](#)

Cleburne Times-Review
January 16, 2024

[HHSC encourages cancer screenings during Cervical Health Awareness Month](#)

CNHI News
January 16, 2024

[January | Cervical Health Awareness Month](#)

Dallas Express
January 12, 2024

El Paso SSLC Cuts Ribbon on New Sports Complex

[El Paso SSLC opens \\$550,000 sports complex for residents with special needs](#)

Drew Pittock
KDBC-TV
January 18, 2024

[HHSC celebrates new sports complex at EP State Supported Living Center](#)

Luisa Barrios
KTSM-TV El Paso
January 18, 2024

[El Paso SSLC opens \\$550,000 sports complex for residents with special needs](#)

Drew Pittock
KFOX-TV



January 18, 2024

[A short story of hope](#)

Avery Escamilla-Wendell

The Prospector Daily

January 30, 2024

DSHS Launches New Virus Dashboard

[Texas DSHS launches new respiratory virus dashboard](#)

Morgan McGrath

KVUE-TV

January 22, 2024

[Texas DSHS launches new respiratory virus dashboard](#)

Zachary Yates

KCEN-TV

January 22, 2024

[Texas Launches New Respiratory Virus Dashboard](#)

Focus Daily News

January 22, 2024

[Texas launches new respiratory illness dashboard](#)

Carter Diggs

KVIA-TV

January 22, 2024

[Texas Publishes 'Big Three' Respiratory Virus Trends and Insights](#)

Robert Carlson, MD

Precision Vaccinations

January 22, 2024

[Texas launches dashboard to track the 'big three' respiratory viruses](#)

Idolina Peralez

CW-39 Houston



HHS in the NEWS

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January 30, 2024

The full articles have been added below for your convenience.

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Governor Abbott, HHSC Announce Medicaid, CHIP Postpartum Coverage Extension

Feds approve 12 months of Medicaid coverage for low-income Texas moms

Karen Brooks Harper
Texas Tribune
January 17, 2024

Texas moms will be able to stay on Medicaid for a year after childbirth, after the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid approved the state's application on Wednesday, according to emails obtained by the Texas Tribune.

The move caps a yearslong effort to extend coverage for low-income moms. Medicaid covers half of all births in Texas, but coverage currently expires after two months.

In 2021, the federal government found Texas' application for continued coverage "unapprovable" due to medically inaccurate language intended to exclude women who had abortions.

But when Roe v Wade was overturned in 2022, giving states the right to ban abortion, the idea gained traction. During the last regular session, lawmakers worked to reach a proposal that the federal government would approve.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' approval on Wednesday makes Texas the 43rd state to be approved for the extended coverage — which was authorized by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 and the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023.

The approval goes into effect on March 1, 2024. Under the Texas plan, anyone whose pregnancy ended in the months prior to March 1 and lost postpartum Medicaid coverage is eligible to re-enroll to maintain coverage until 12 months after their pregnancy ended.

"This is a fantastic step forward to support healthy moms and babies," said Diana Forester, director of health policy at Texans Care for Children.

Maternal health advocates have been calling for a full year of postpartum Medicaid for years, and it's long been the top recommendation from the state's Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee.

During the regular legislative session last year the bill to expand postpartum Medicaid for Pregnant Women caught bipartisan support from a wide-ranging coalition of legislators and advocates, and it initially passed the Texas House with overwhelming backing.

But the bill hit a snag in the Senate as Republicans demanded an amendment that specified women who had elective abortions do not qualify for the extended Medicaid coverage. The original bill said simply that the coverage began on the last day of pregnancy; it did not specify how that pregnancy had to end.

Abortion is banned in Texas except to save the life of the pregnant patient. Anti-abortion groups have said that allowing extended Medicaid coverage to go to women who had out-of-state or illicit abortions is tantamount to using state funds to support abortion.

Throughout the session, advocates called for the Legislature to pass a "clean" bill that matches the language in Medicaid guidelines to ensure the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services quickly accepts the state's application for the extension.

The law now includes a "legislative purpose" section that reads, "Out of the state's profound respect for the lives of mothers and unborn children, Medicaid coverage is extended for mothers whose pregnancies end in the delivery of the child or end in the natural loss of the child."

"We are so grateful to Representative Toni Rose, (D-Dallas), Senator Lois Kolkhorst (R-Brenham), the staff at the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), and everyone else who worked hard to make this happen," Forester said in the emailed statement. "Disagreements between elected officials get a lot of attention, but this is an example of how our state legislators really can come together to improve access to healthcare for Texas families."

This bill comes at a crucial moment, as millions of Texans face the end of Medicaid benefits for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic began in March 2020. Texans who receive Medicaid benefits are encouraged to make sure their information is up to date at [YourTexasBenefits.com](https://www.yourtexasbenefits.com).

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Karen Brooks Harper

KIII-TV

January 17, 2024



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This bill comes at a crucial moment, as millions of Texans face the end of Medicaid benefits for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic began in March 2020. Texans who receive Medicaid benefits are encouraged to make sure their information is up to date at YourTexasBenefits.com.

[Postpartum Medicaid extension for Texans goes into effect in March](#)

Elena Rivera

KERA

January 17, 2024

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) on Wednesday approved Texas’ plan to extend postpartum Medicaid coverage from two months to 12 months.

The Texas Health and Human Services Commission submitted the plan to CMS in October. The extended coverage goes into effect March 1.

New parents who lost their Medicaid before then but are still within a year of giving birth can re-enroll.

Gov. Greg Abbott signed House Bill 12 into law last year. The bill, authored by Rep. Toni Rose, is designed to help new parents take care of health issues before they become a crisis.

“I feel like this is one of my most fulfilling pieces of legislation, because it saves lives,” Rose told KERA in June.



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Chronic diseases like diabetes and high blood pressure, along with bleeding and mental health issues, account for many of the pregnancy-related deaths in Texas, according to a report from the Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee.

Advocates, birth workers and researchers have said this extended coverage will lower the rates of maternal mortality and morbidity in the state.

In 2022 almost half of all births in Texas were financed by Medicaid.

[Feds Approve Texas' Plan to Expand Medicaid to Postpartum Moms](#)

Maggie Q. Thompson

Austin Chronicle

January 17, 2024

It's been a little more than four months since the Texas legislature passed a law aiming to expand Medicaid access to moms 12 months postpartum and now, with the feds approving the state's request to do so, the implementation process can begin. Low-income moms should qualify for Medicaid March 1.

Texas is one of the last states to adopt Medicaid coverage for moms 12 months postpartum, a Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) spokesperson told the Chronicle last week. CMS approved the state's plan for expansion today, and it's a "game changer," said State Rep. Donna Howard, D-Austin, who chairs the Texas Women's Health Caucus.

"We've been working on this for years. It's been the number one recommendation of the Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee," Howard told the Chronicle. "These are preventable deaths we'll be able to address with access to care, especially in a post-Roe world where we're going to have more pregnancies."

State Rep. Toni Rose, D-Dallas, authored House Bill 12, which passed with broad bipartisan support last year. "The deck is stacked against new mothers and women that are expecting, and I'm proud to have authored a bill that expands postpartum care for low-income new moms in Texas," Rose said in a statement. "While we celebrate this win for new moms – the work does not end here in our effort to expand Medicaid across Texas."

As for the work left to do, Howard told the Chronicle that top priorities for reducing Texas' unusually high maternal mortality rate include clarifying medical exceptions for abortions and protecting access to contraceptives. "I've had a bill for session after session to allow for reimbursement for contraceptives in our CHIP program. We are one of only two states that don't do that and we have



one of the highest teen pregnancy rates in the country, and we know teen pregnancies are more likely to have complications.”

For new moms applying for Medicaid coverage, the process may not be smooth. Medicaid applications and renewals are still problematic in Texas. Since July, a group of anonymous whistleblowers have sent a series of letters to Gov. Greg Abbott detailing dysfunction at Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), which processes Medicaid applications and renewals. Last month, the Texas Women’s Health Caucus sent a letter to HHSC demanding action on “the crisis in Texas’ eligibility system.”

An HHSC spokesperson told the Chronicle last week that they are "working to implement 12-month postpartum coverage effective March 1."

[Medicaid coverage for Texas mothers to increase to 12 months postpartum after federal sign-off](#)

Taylor Goldenstein
Houston Chronicle
January 17, 2024

Low-income Texas women will soon be able to keep their Medicaid benefits for 12 months after childbirth. The state on Wednesday received federal approval for the extension, which will take effect March 1.

It’s a drastic bump from the two months of Medicaid coverage available under current rules, and thousands of Texans are expected to benefit.

Almost half of Texas births were financed by Medicaid in 2022, according to data from the Kaiser Family Foundation. Until now, the state had been among the minority that had not approved the extended postpartum coverage.

Advocates say the full year of Medicaid benefits is critical to prevent maternal deaths and ensure new mothers can get needed follow-up care.

Both new and existing enrollees in the program will be able to take advantage of the extension, which is funded by state and federal dollars. Texans who lost their Medicaid coverage before March 1 but are still within 12 months of the end of their pregnancy will see their benefits automatically reinstated, according to state officials.



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"Twelve months of postpartum coverage will help mothers across this state gain access to high-quality healthcare," said Texas Health and Human Services Commission Executive Commissioner Cecile Erwin Young in a written statement.

The federal approval comes after years of lawmakers in the GOP-led Legislature clashing over whether to fund the extension and how to address women who have had abortions.

An attempt by Texas House members in 2021 failed when they could not find enough backing in the Senate. That year, the more conservative upper chamber agreed to a six-month extension, but the federal government never signed off.

Lawmakers involved in the effort said the feds took issue with an anti-abortion provision stipulating that Texans were only eligible if "the woman delivers or experiences an involuntary miscarriage."

Last year's successful compromise bill, approved with the help of a bipartisan group of lawmakers, includes similar language, but it is housed in a different part of the legislation that does not change state statute, making it a mostly symbolic gesture. Texas banned abortion after the fall of Roe vs. Wade with only one exception to save the life of the pregnant patient.

Governor Abbott, HHSC Announce Medicaid, CHIP Postpartum Coverage Extension To 12 Months

Gilbert Rodriguez
Texas Insider
January 18, 2024

Governor Greg Abbott and the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) today announced that the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has approved Texas' request to extend Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) coverage from two to 12 months after pregnancy.

"This past regular legislative session, I was proud to sign a crucial bipartisan law that extends postpartum coverage for Texas mothers from two to 12 months," said Governor Abbott. "With Texas' application approved by CMS, this postpartum extension will help Texas mothers receive high-quality healthcare across our great state. I thank the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, Senator Lois Kolkhorst, and Representative Toni Rose for their work to ensure this critical postpartum extension is available to new mothers in need across Texas."

"I thank Governor Abbott and the Texas Legislature for standing by our families," said HHS Executive Commissioner Cecile Erwin Young. "Twelve months of postpartum coverage will help mothers across this state gain access to high-quality healthcare."



Last year, Governor Abbott signed House Bill 12 into law, which extended Medicaid and CHIP postpartum coverage from two to 12 months. The law will take effect on March 1, 2024. Under the state plan amendments, anyone enrolled in Medicaid or CHIP who is pregnant or becomes pregnant will be automatically enrolled for 12 months of postpartum coverage. Services covered by Medicaid and CHIP include prenatal doctor visits, prenatal vitamins, labor and delivery, and postpartum checkups.

Coverage will be automatically reinstated for individuals who are not current Medicaid or CHIP recipients, but who were enrolled in Medicaid or CHIP in Texas while pregnant and are still within their 12-month postpartum period, as long as they are still residents of Texas. Their coverage will be reinstated for the remainder of their 12-month postpartum period.

Women who are enrolled in Healthy Texas Women who are still within their 12-month postpartum period will be transitioned back to full-coverage Medicaid or CHIP for the remainder of their 12-month postpartum period.

Texas projects approximately 137,000 women will benefit from 12-months postpartum coverage in fiscal year 2025. To apply for Medicaid or CHIP, call 2-1-1 and choose Option 2 or visit YourTexasBenefits.com.

[Medicaid, CHIP postpartum coverage in Texas extended from 2 months to 1 year](#)

Juliana Russ

KXAN-TV

January 18, 2024

On Thursday, Texas' request to extend Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) coverage from two to 12 months after pregnancy was approved.

House Bill 12 was signed into law last year, and it will take effect March 1.

Gov. Greg Abbott and the Texas Health and Human Services Commission made the announcement.

Family, doctor fight for Texas boy's urgent treatment after Medicaid denial

"With Texas' application approved by CMS, this postpartum extension will help Texas mothers receive high-quality healthcare across our great state," Abbott said.

According to the governor's office, approximately 137,000 women are projected to benefit from 12-month postpartum coverage in fiscal year 2025.

New Texas laws taking effect in 2024



“Under the state plan amendments, anyone enrolled in Medicaid or CHIP who is pregnant or becomes pregnant will be automatically enrolled for 12 months of postpartum coverage. Services covered by Medicaid and CHIP include prenatal doctor visits, prenatal vitamins, labor and delivery, and postpartum checkups,” a statement from the governor’s office said.

[Federal government approves 1 year of Medicaid coverage for Texas mothers](#)

Hannah Norton

Community Impact Newspaper

January 18, 2024

Beginning March 1, low-income Texas mothers can receive Medicaid coverage for one year after childbirth. The federal government approved Texas’ extension Jan. 17.

Medicaid covered nearly half of Texas births in 2022, according to data from the Kaiser Family Foundation. Yet low-income women are currently eligible for two months of postpartum coverage.

The details

New and existing enrollees will be eligible for the extension. Women whose Medicaid coverage expired before March 1 will be automatically re-enrolled and receive coverage for 12 months after their pregnancy ended, according to Gov. Greg Abbott's office.

Over 137,000 new parents will benefit from the extension, according to the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

Beyond prenatal care, Medicaid covers checkups and other services for mothers and their children.

“This is a fantastic step forward to support healthy moms and babies,” said Diana Forester, the director of health policy at Texans Care for Children, in a statement.

How we got here

Texas is the 43rd state to extend postpartum Medicaid coverage to 12 months. The change is a top recommendation of the Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee, which documented rising rates of maternal deaths and severe complications in its 2022 report.

Maternal health advocates have pushed for the extension for years, but proposals stalled as lawmakers argued over coverage for women who had abortions.

In 2021, lawmakers agreed to a six-month extension, but the federal government did not approve it.

Rep. Toni Rose, D-Dallas, led a bipartisan effort to expand coverage for low-income women during the 2023 legislative session. The legislation, known as House Bill 12, includes a “legislative purpose” section that says only “mothers whose pregnancies end in the delivery of the child or end in the natural loss of the child” are eligible for the extension.



This section, however, does not hold legal weight.

"The deck is stacked against new mothers and women that are expecting," Rose said in a statement. "The simple fact of the matter is that only providing new mothers with postpartum care for two months is unacceptable."

Texas Democrats said they would fight to expand Medicaid coverage for more Texans.

"We are so grateful to Rep. Toni Rose, Sen. Lois Kolkhorst, the staff at the Texas Health and Human Services Commission ... and everyone else who worked hard to make this happen," Forester said. "Disagreements between elected officials get a lot of attention, but this is an example of how our state legislators really can come together to improve access to health care for Texas families."

Texans who are eligible for Medicaid coverage can access their plan and update their information at www.yourtexasbenefits.com.

[Texas Health and Human Services Commission extends children's health insurance](#)

KDBC-TV

January 17, 2024

Governor Greg Abbott and the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) announced Wednesday that the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has approved Texas' request to extend Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) coverage from two to 12 months after pregnancy.

In a statement, Governor Abbott said,

This past regular legislative session, I was proud to sign a crucial bipartisan law that extends postpartum coverage for Texas mothers from two to 12 months. With Texas' application approved by CMS, this postpartum extension will help Texas mothers receive high-quality healthcare across our great state. I thank the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, Senator Lois Kolkhorst, and Representative Toni Rose for their work to ensure this critical postpartum extension is available to new mothers in need across Texas.

[Texas expands postpartum Medicaid coverage to 12 months for low-income mothers](#)

Margo Lepe

KFOX-TV

January 22, 2024

Texas mothers with Medicaid will soon catch a break and get longer coverage after having their baby thanks to a new law passed by the Texas legislature.



Starting on March 1st, Medicaid coverage for low-income new moms across the state will be extended 12 months after giving birth.

Currently Medicaid for new mom's caps off two months after the baby is born, which makes this a big milestone for postpartum mothers. But, Texas is actually one of the last states in the country to implement this extra coverage.

The woman's body goes through so much during pregnancy and it's not just during pregnancy, but after pregnancy. As a matter of fact, for me, it was a really scary time because I ended up getting diagnosed with Hashimoto's hypothyroidism right after I had my daughter," El Paso mom Angela Berruecos said. "Plus, a lot of women, we go through postpartum and baby blues, so we really need that extra care.

Berruecos was once on Medicaid and said she's in favor of the new law, especially the additional coverage after having a baby.

Texas is the 43rd state to approve the extended coverage for low-income moms and the timing for this is pivotal, as millions of Texans continue to utilize Medicaid.

KFOX14 spoke with Thomas Vazquez with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission. While he wasn't available for an interview, he told KFOX14 this approval also means anyone whose pregnancy ended before March 1st and lost postpartum Medicaid coverage is also eligible to re-enroll to maintain coverage until 12 months after their pregnancy ended.

The extra coverage is something Berruecos said she wishes had when she had her daughter.

"We matter too as mothers, especially after having our babies. We need that extra support," Berruecos said.

Anyone needing more information about Medicaid or these new benefits can call 211 or [click here](#).

[Feds approve 12 months of Medicaid coverage for low-income Texas moms](#)

Karen Brooks Harper

KRGV-TV

January 17, 2024

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Feds approve Medicaid for Texas mothers up to 12 months after birth beginning March 1

Nicole Villalpando

Corpus Christi Caller-Times

January 22, 2024

Texas mothers are one step closer to getting health coverage for 12 months following pregnancy.

This week, the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services approved Texas' plan to provide 12 months of postpartum health care coverage through Medicaid or Children's Health Insurance Program instead of the current 60 days. Those programs are for people who qualify based on income. The extended coverage will begin March 1.

"With Texas' application approved by CMS, this postpartum extension will help Texas mothers receive high-quality healthcare across our great state," Gov. Greg Abbott said in a statement Wednesday.

In October, Texas' Health & Human Services Commission submitted its plan for 12 months of continuous postpartum coverage after the state Legislature passed House Bill 12 during the 2023 regular session in May. The bill had 73 sponsors and was bipartisan.

In June, Abbott signed House Bill 12 into law, paving the way for the state to seek approval from CMS.

The state expects approximately 137,000 women will benefit from 12-months postpartum coverage in fiscal 2025.

"This is a fantastic step forward to support healthy moms and babies," said Diana Forester, director of health policy at advocacy group Texans Care for Children. "Disagreements between elected officials get a lot of attention, but this is an example of how our state legislators really can come together to improve access to health care for Texas families."

Many starts and stops

This is not the first time Texas tried to extend coverage for postpartum people. Two years ago, the state had submitted a plan to extend coverage to six months, but that was not approved by CMS in the hopes that Texas lawmakers would seek a 12-month extension during the 2023 legislative session. Twelve months has become standard among almost all the states. As of this month, 47 states and Washington, D.C., either have 12 months or plan to have 12 months of coverage. Only Idaho, Iowa, Arkansas and Wisconsin do not.

The news that the extended coverage was going to be put in place was celebrated on Wednesday. "I'm almost amazed that it is actually happening," said Regina Rogoff, CEO of People's Community Clinic, a federally qualified health center, which provides care for many people with lower income levels.

"It's a recognition that the postpartum period is longer than we've recognized in the past," Rogoff said.

Why is this important?

Pregnancy is a major life change, Rogoff said. Complications such as increases in blood pressure, heart conditions and postpartum depression can be life-threatening and can occur after the initial 60 days that was previously covered by Medicaid in Texas.

"The months following pregnancy are critical for monitoring women for potentially dangerous health conditions that they are more susceptible to after giving birth," said Dr. Kathleen V. Butler, chief medical officer and chief quality office for Lone Star Circle of Care, a federally qualified health center

Maternal deaths after pregnancy have been rising across the United States, Based on 2018-2021 numbers, health care advocacy group KFF found that Texas ranked 14 for the highest number of maternal deaths per 1,000 live births.

"We expect that the extension of Medicaid will help improve the health of women in the postpartum period," Butler said. "In doing so, Texas may improve its maternal mortality rate."

While People's Community Clinic and Lone Star Circle of Care help anyone with or without insurance, this is especially good if a mother has complications and needs to be hospitalized or seek specialized care.

This coverage extension "is good for moms and babies. That's a win-win," Rogoff said.

How will the new coverage work?

This new law will affect future postpartum people as well as current new mothers. Anyone who has given birth but whose Medicaid coverage ended can reenroll if they are still within the 12-month period.

The state says coverage will be automatically reinstated for individuals who are not current Medicaid or CHIP recipients, but who were enrolled in Medicaid or CHIP in Texas while pregnant and are still within their 12-month postpartum period, as long as they are still Texas residents. Their coverage will be reinstated for the remainder of their 12-month postpartum period.

Women who are enrolled in Healthy Texas Women program, another state health care program, and are still within their 12-month postpartum period will be transitioned back to full-coverage Medicaid or CHIP for the remainder of their 12-month postpartum period.



Texas has recently experience problems maintaining and even reenrolling people in Medicaid and CHIP during the post-pandemic Medicaid unwinding process that began last year.

Texans Care for Children's Forester said, "Now that the plan has been approved, we encourage state officials to move quickly to ensure that Texas moms who were recently pregnant and lost Medicaid coverage are able to re-enroll as soon as possible."

Clinics like People's also will be working on helping new moms who lost coverage get reenrolled in Medicaid.

How to apply for Medicaid or CHIP in Texas?

To apply for Medicaid or CHIP or to find out about your status, call 211 and choose Option 2 or visit YourTexasBenefits.com.

[Feds approve 12 months of Medicaid coverage for low-income Texas moms](#)

Karen Brooks Harper

KSCC-TV

January 17, 2024

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The move caps a yearslong effort to extend coverage for low-income moms. Medicaid covers half of all births in Texas, but coverage currently expires after two months.

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The approval goes into effect on March 1, 2024. Under the Texas plan, anyone whose pregnancy ended in the months prior to March 1 and lost postpartum Medicaid coverage is eligible to re-enroll to maintain coverage until 12 months after their pregnancy ended.



HHS in the NEWS

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But the bill hit a snag in the Senate as Republicans demanded an amendment that specified women who had elective abortions do not qualify for the extended Medicaid coverage. The original bill said simply that the coverage began on the last day of pregnancy; it did not specify how that pregnancy had to end.

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[Medicaid, CHIP postpartum coverage in Texas extended from 2 months to 1 year](#)

Julianna Russ
Concho Valley Homepage
January 18, 2024

On Thursday, Texas' request to extend Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) coverage from two to 12 months after pregnancy was approved.

House Bill 12 was signed into law last year, and it will take effect March 1.

Gov. Greg Abbott and the Texas Health and Human Services Commission made the announcement.

"With Texas' application approved by CMS, this postpartum extension will help Texas mothers receive high-quality healthcare across our great state," Abbott said.

According to the governor's office, approximately 137,000 women are projected to benefit from 12-month postpartum coverage in fiscal year 2025.

"Under the state plan amendments, anyone enrolled in Medicaid or CHIP who is pregnant or becomes pregnant will be automatically enrolled for 12 months of postpartum coverage. Services covered by Medicaid and CHIP include prenatal doctor visits, prenatal vitamins, labor and delivery, and postpartum checkups," a statement from the governor's office said.

[Feds approve 12 months of Medicaid coverage for low-income Texas moms](#)

Karen Brooks Harper
KVUE-TV
January 18, 2024

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The move caps a yearslong effort to extend coverage for low-income moms. Medicaid covers half of all births in Texas, but coverage currently expires after two months.

In 2021, the federal government found Texas' application for continued coverage "unapprovable" due to medically inaccurate language intended to exclude women who had abortions.

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Austin American-Statesman

Nicole Villalpando
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Karen Brooks Harper

News4SA.com

January 17, 2024

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FOX San Antonio
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KAGS-TV

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The law now includes a “legislative purpose” section that reads, “Out of the state’s profound respect for the lives of mothers and unborn children, Medicaid coverage is extended for mothers whose pregnancies end in the delivery of the child or end in the natural loss of the child.”

“We are so grateful to Representative Toni Rose, (D-Dallas), Senator Lois Kolkhorst (R-Brenham), the staff at the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), and everyone else who worked hard to make this happen,” Forester said in the emailed statement. “Disagreements between elected officials get a lot of attention, but this is an example of how our state legislators really can come together to improve access to healthcare for Texas families.”

This bill comes at a crucial moment, as millions of Texans face the end of Medicaid benefits for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic began in March 2020. Texans who receive Medicaid benefits are encouraged to make sure their information is up to date at [YourTexasBenefits.com](https://www.yourtexasbenefits.com).

[Feds approve Medicaid for Texas mothers up to 12 months after birth beginning March 1](#)

Nicole Villalpando

San Angelo Standard Times

January 22, 2024

Texas mothers are one step closer to getting health coverage for 12 months following pregnancy.

This week, the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services approved Texas' plan to provide 12 months of postpartum health care coverage through Medicaid or Children's Health Insurance Program instead of the current 60 days. Those programs are for people who qualify based on income. The extended coverage will begin March 1.

"With Texas' application approved by CMS, this postpartum extension will help Texas mothers receive high-quality healthcare across our great state," Gov. Greg Abbott said in a statement Wednesday.

In October, Texas' Health & Human Services Commission submitted its plan for 12 months of continuous postpartum coverage after the state Legislature passed House Bill 12 during the 2023 regular session in May. The bill had 73 sponsors and was bipartisan.

In June, Abbott signed House Bill 12 into law, paving the way for the state to seek approval from CMS.

The state expects approximately 137,000 women will benefit from 12-months postpartum coverage in fiscal 2025.

"This is a fantastic step forward to support healthy moms and babies," said Diana Forester, director of health policy at advocacy group Texans Care for Children. "Disagreements between elected officials get a lot of attention, but this is an example of how our state legislators really can come together to improve access to health care for Texas families."

Many starts and stops

This is not the first time Texas tried to extend coverage for postpartum people. Two years ago, the state had submitted a plan to extend coverage to six months, but that was not approved by CMS in the hopes that Texas lawmakers would seek a 12-month extension during the 2023 legislative session. Twelve months has become standard among almost all the states. As of this month, 47 states and Washington, D.C., either have 12 months or plan to have 12 months of coverage. Only Idaho, Iowa, Arkansas and Wisconsin do not.

The news that the extended coverage was going to be put in place was celebrated on Wednesday. "I'm almost amazed that it is actually happening," said Regina Rogoff, CEO of People's Community Clinic, a federally qualified health center, which provides care for many people with lower income levels.

"It's a recognition that the postpartum period is longer than we've recognized in the past," Rogoff said.

Why is this important?

Pregnancy is a major life change, Rogoff said. Complications such as increases in blood pressure, heart conditions and postpartum depression can be life-threatening and can occur after the initial 60 days that was previously covered by Medicaid in Texas.

"The months following pregnancy are critical for monitoring women for potentially dangerous health conditions that they are more susceptible to after giving birth," said Dr. Kathleen V. Butler, chief medical officer and chief quality officer for Lone Star Circle of Care, a federally qualified health center

Maternal deaths after pregnancy have been rising across the United States, Based on 2018-2021 numbers, health care advocacy group KFF found that Texas ranked 14 for the highest number of maternal deaths per 1,000 live births.

"We expect that the extension of Medicaid will help improve the health of women in the postpartum period," Butler said. "In doing so, Texas may improve its maternal mortality rate."

While People's Community Clinic and Lone Star Circle of Care help anyone with or without insurance, this is especially good if a mother has complications and needs to be hospitalized or seek specialized care.



This coverage extension "is good for moms and babies. That's a win-win," Rogoff said.

How will the new coverage work?

This new law will affect future postpartum people as well as current new mothers. Anyone who has given birth but whose Medicaid coverage ended can reenroll if they are still within the 12-month period.

The state says coverage will be automatically reinstated for individuals who are not current Medicaid or CHIP recipients, but who were enrolled in Medicaid or CHIP in Texas while pregnant and are still within their 12-month postpartum period, as long as they are still Texas residents. Their coverage will be reinstated for the remainder of their 12-month postpartum period.

Women who are enrolled in Healthy Texas Women program, another state health care program, and are still within their 12-month postpartum period will be transitioned back to full-coverage Medicaid or CHIP for the remainder of their 12-month postpartum period.

Texas has recently experience problems maintaining and even reenrolling people in Medicaid and CHIP during the post-pandemic Medicaid unwinding process that began last year.

Texans Care for Children's Forester said, "Now that the plan has been approved, we encourage state officials to move quickly to ensure that Texas moms who were recently pregnant and lost Medicaid coverage are able to re-enroll as soon as possible."

Clinics like People's also will be working on helping new moms who lost coverage get reenrolled in Medicaid.

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Abilene Reporter News

January 22, 2024

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Wichita Falls Times Record
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Lubbock Avalanche-Journal

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Governor Abbott Declares January Human Trafficking Month

[Texas declares January Human Trafficking Prevention Month](#)

Kelsey Thompson

KXAN-TV

January 3, 2024

Gov. Greg Abbott and the Texas Health and Human Services Commission announced Wednesday that January would be recognized as Human Trafficking Prevention Month within the state.

Several state-run programs and initiatives are available as a means to educate and support human trafficking prevention efforts, including:

HHSC's Human Trafficking Resource Center: Helps assist with and fund efforts centered on ending human trafficking statewide. Those who've experienced human trafficking can utilize the center to access necessary resources, while the center also offers human trafficking prevention training opportunities for health care providers.

"Stop Human Trafficking" specialty license plate: The license plate series was launched in 2023 as a means of raising awareness surrounding human trafficking and to remind residents to support suspicious activity to the Texas Department of Public Safety via the iWatchTexas community reporting system. Sales from the license plates benefit the Stop Human Trafficking donation account, a funding source to help cover housing assessment, treatment services, shelter and support for youth survivors
Texas Human Trafficking Prevention Task Force: HHSC aids in the task force, which is made up of more than 50 organizations that work to help identify trafficking victims and assist in traffickers being investigated and prosecuted.

"Each year, Texas dedicates the month of January to raise awareness about human trafficking and honor the hard work of so many people and organizations striving to end this scourge," Abbott said in a release Wednesday. "As Governor, Texas has bolstered resources for survivors of human trafficking and we have increased penalties for offenders to ensure they are punished to the fullest extent of the



law. While we have made great progress in our fight against human trafficking, we must still come together to educate and help prevent others from falling victim to this horrific crime. This month, and every month, I encourage all Texans to educate themselves about the dangers and signs of human trafficking and how to support survivors.”

Those who think they might have witnessed a trafficking incident can contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline by calling 1 (888) 373-7888 or via text at 233733. An online chat option is also available.

[Abbott recognizes January 2024 as Human Trafficking Prevention Month](#)

Odessa American

January 3, 2024

Governor Greg Abbott and the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) on Wednesday encouraged Texans to educate themselves and their loved ones about the dangers of human trafficking and how to combat this heinous crime plaguing Texas and the nation. The Governor proclaimed January 2024 as Human Trafficking Prevention Month in Texas.

“Each year, Texas dedicates the month of January to raise awareness about human trafficking and honor the hard work of so many people and organizations striving to end this scourge,” said Governor Abbott in a news release. “As Governor, Texas has bolstered resources for survivors of human trafficking and we have increased penalties for offenders to ensure they are punished to the fullest extent of the law. While we have made great progress in our fight against human trafficking, we must still come together to educate and help prevent others from falling victim to this horrific crime. This month, and every month, I encourage all Texans to educate themselves about the dangers and signs of human trafficking and how to support survivors.”

“Preventing and properly addressing human trafficking is a challenging task, and it takes all of us to address it,” said HHSC Family and Youth Services and Supports Associate Commissioner Crystal Starkey, in the release.

Texans can familiarize themselves with the following services and programs dedicated to fighting human trafficking:

Human Trafficking Resource Center

HHSC’s Human Trafficking Resource Center (HTRC) promotes, assists, and funds efforts that stop human trafficking in Texas. The HTRC connects those who have experienced human trafficking to needed resources and reviews and approves human trafficking prevention training for healthcare providers.



HHS in the NEWS

#TeamTexasHHS ★ #TexasHHS Proud

The HTRC also offers training for providers and others who may play a role in helping survivors of human trafficking. Among those is HEART, or "Hearing, Evaluating, Activating, Resourcing and Training." This free, trauma-informed course is for licensed healthcare practitioners or others who want to learn ways to prevent or identify human trafficking in healthcare and social services settings, including front desk staff and others who interact closely with patients.

Learn more about HEART and other approved human trafficking trainings [here](#).

"Stop Human Trafficking" Specialty License Plate

Texans can help fight human trafficking by purchasing a "Stop Human Trafficking" specialty license plate. Launched in 2023, these license plates raise awareness about human trafficking, support survivors, and remind Texans to report suspicious activity to the Texas Department of Public Safety through the iWatchTexas community reporting system.

Proceeds from sales of the plates benefit the Stop Human Trafficking donation account, which pays for a housing assessment, treatment services, shelter, and support for youth survivors of human trafficking.

Texas Human Trafficking Prevention Task Force

HHSC also participates in the Texas Human Trafficking Prevention Task Force, a collaborative of more than 50 organizations that educates the public, identifies victims of human trafficking, and ensures traffickers are investigated and prosecuted. The task force also develops legislative recommendations to enhance the state's efforts in combating human trafficking.

Anyone who believes they have witnessed human trafficking should contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888 (TTY: 711). You can also text "233733" to the hotline or go to the Hotline Web Chat.

Learn more about HHSC's efforts to combat human trafficking [here](#).

[Governor Abbott Recognizes January 2024 As Human Trafficking Prevention Month](#)

Brownwood News
January 4, 2024

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[Governor Abbott recognizes January 2024 as Human Trafficking Prevention month](#)

MyParisTexas.com

January 4, 2024

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[January is Human Trafficking Prevention Month in Texas](#)

Yantis Green
San Angelo Live
January 4, 2024



HHS in the NEWS

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Governor Greg Abbott and the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) urged Texans Wednesday to acquaint themselves and their families with the perils of human trafficking and methods to combat this abhorrent crime that afflicts Texas and the nation. Governor Abbott proclaimed January 2024 as Human Trafficking Prevention Month in Texas.

"Annually, Texas designates January to heighten awareness regarding human trafficking and acknowledge the dedicated efforts of numerous individuals and organizations striving to eradicate this blight," stated Governor Abbott. "In my capacity as Governor, Texas has augmented resources for survivors of human trafficking and heightened penalties for perpetrators to ensure maximum legal repercussions. Despite commendable strides in our battle against human trafficking, concerted efforts are imperative to educate and prevent others from succumbing to this abominable crime. This month, and every month, I encourage all Texans to familiarize themselves with the dangers and indicators of human trafficking and extend support to survivors."

Crystal Starkey, HHSC Family and Youth Services and Supports Associate Commissioner, remarked, "Preventing and effectively addressing human trafficking is a formidable task that necessitates collective action."

Texans can acquaint themselves with the following services and initiatives dedicated to combating human trafficking:

HHSC's Human Trafficking Resource Center (HTRC) champions, aids, and funds endeavors aimed at curbing human trafficking in Texas. The HTRC connects trafficking survivors with essential resources, sanctions and endorses human trafficking prevention training for healthcare providers.

The HTRC additionally provides training for healthcare professionals and other relevant individuals on recognizing and preventing human trafficking in healthcare and social services settings, encompassing front desk staff and those closely interacting with patients. One such program is HEART, or "Hearing, Evaluating, Activating, Resourcing and Training," a free, trauma-informed course tailored for licensed healthcare practitioners and others seeking insights into preventing or identifying human trafficking.

More information on HEART and other approved human trafficking trainings can be found [here](#).

Texans can contribute to the fight against human trafficking by acquiring a "Stop Human Trafficking" specialty license plate. Introduced in 2023, these plates raise awareness, provide aid to survivors, and prompt Texans to report suspicious activities to the Texas Department of Public Safety via the iWatchTexas community reporting system.

Proceeds from the plate sales bolster the Stop Human Trafficking donation account, financing housing assessments, treatment services, shelter, and support for young trafficking survivors.



HHSC actively engages in the Texas Human Trafficking Prevention Task Force, a coalition comprising over 50 organizations dedicated to public education, victim identification, and ensuring the investigation and prosecution of traffickers. The task force also formulates legislative proposals to enhance the state's anti-trafficking efforts.

Individuals suspecting instances of human trafficking are encouraged to contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888 (TTY: 711), text "233733" to the hotline, or engage in the Hotline Web Chat.

Additional insights into HHSC's initiatives against human trafficking can be found [here](#).

[Human Trafficking Prevention Month; last year approximately 80 survivors were helped in Abilene](#)

Karina Hollingsworth

KXTX-TV Abilene

January 4, 2024

January is Human Trafficking Prevention Month, and a common misconception about human trafficking is that it does not happen in the United States. According to a study by World Population Review the United States is ranked as one of the worst countries globally for human trafficking with 199,000 incidents occurring each year.

Another misconception is that human trafficking only happens in big cities. According to Stephanie Rocha the executive director of Beyond Trafficking it's happening right in our backyard.

"Last year we helped approximately 80 victims," Rocha said. We are actually assisting one today that is being lured into trafficking. This week alone I've had three new people."

Rocha says most people are not kidnapped by strangers. Many times, victims are preyed on by someone they know.

"A lot of times people think trafficking looks like the movie Taken," Rocha said. "Here in Abilene that's not exactly what we see. More than likely it's a family member."

Sgt. Marc Couch says local law enforcement is always on the lookout for human trafficking victims.



"We're looking for things like a child in a traffic stop that doesn't make eye contact with you, and that's trying to hide." Sgt. Couch said. "Most times children are really excited to see officers and they are curious."

Mary McDowell was only sixteen years old when she met her trafficker in an AOL chatroom. McDowell said her trafficker promised her happiness and marriage. But in March of 2005 things took a turn for the worse.

"We left Texas, and I don't know exactly what drug he used but he made me go to sleep," McDowell recalled. "When I got to Louisiana, I stopped in a town called Alexandria. We ended up at this motel and I was there for 5 days. I don't know how many men were coming and going. I was raped multiple times. I was tied down to a bed. I had no control over my body."

After 5 long days McDowell heard a knock on the door.

"I was found by the police and immediately taken to the police station," McDowell said. "Instead of getting medical help I was taken to juvenile detention."

If you or anyone you know are human trafficking victims, please contact Beyond Trafficking at 325-864-5418.

Gov. Abbott Recognizes January 2024 As Human Trafficking Prevention Month

Athens Daily Review

January 9, 2024

Gov. Greg Abbott and the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) encourage Texans to educate themselves and their loved ones about the dangers of human trafficking and how to combat this heinous crime plaguing Texas and the nation. The Governor proclaimed January 2024 as Human Trafficking Prevention Month in Texas.

"Each year, Texas dedicates the month of January to raise awareness about human trafficking and honor the hard work of so many people and organizations striving to end this scourge," said Gov. Abbott. "As Governor, Texas has bolstered resources for survivors of human trafficking and we have increased penalties for offenders to ensure they are punished to the fullest extent of the law."

"While we have made great progress in our fight against human trafficking, we must still come together to educate and help prevent others from falling victim to this horrific crime. This month, and



HHS in the NEWS

#TeamTexasHHS ★ #TexasHHS Proud

every month, I encourage all Texans to educate themselves about the dangers and signs of human trafficking and how to support survivors."

"Preventing and properly addressing human trafficking is a challenging task, and it takes all of us to address it," said HHSC Family and Youth Services and Supports Associate Commissioner Crystal Starkey.

HHSC's Human Trafficking Resource Center (HTRC) promotes, assists, and funds efforts that stop human trafficking in Texas. The HTRC connects those who have experienced human trafficking to needed resources and reviews and approves human trafficking prevention training for healthcare providers.

The HTRC also offers training for providers and others who may play a role in helping survivors of human trafficking. Among those is HEART, or "Hearing, Evaluating, Activating, Resourcing and Training." This free, trauma-informed course is for licensed healthcare practitioners or others who want to learn ways to prevent or identify human trafficking in healthcare and social services settings, including front desk staff and others who interact closely with patients.

Texans can help fight human trafficking by purchasing a "Stop Human Trafficking" specialty license plate. Launched in 2023, these license plates raise awareness about human trafficking, support survivors, and remind Texans to report suspicious activity to the Texas Department of Public Safety through the iWatchTexas community reporting system.

Proceeds from sales of the plates benefit the Stop Human Trafficking donation account, which pays for a housing assessment, treatment services, shelter, and support for youth survivors of human trafficking.

HHSC also participates in the Texas Human Trafficking Prevention Task Force, a collaborative of more than 50 organizations that educates the public, identifies victims of human trafficking, and ensures traffickers are investigated and prosecuted. The task force also develops legislative recommendations to enhance the state's efforts in combating human trafficking.

Anyone who believes they have witnessed human trafficking should contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888 (TTY: 711). You can also text "233733" to the hotline or go to the Hotline Web Chat.

[Gov. Recognizes January 2024 as Human Trafficking Prevention Month](#)

Texas Border Business

January 4, 2024



HHS in the NEWS

#TeamTexasHHS ★ #TexasHHS Proud

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Texans can familiarize themselves with the following services and programs dedicated to fighting human trafficking:

Human Trafficking Resource Center

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Learn more about HEART and other approved human trafficking trainings [here](#).

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HHSC Encourages Cervical Cancer Screenings

[Encouraging Cancer Screenings During Cervical Health Awareness Month](#)

Mega Doctor News (MDN)

January 8, 2024



HHS in the NEWS

#TeamTexasHHS ★ #TexasHHS Proud

As part of National Cervical Health Awareness Month this January, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission is encouraging women to get screened for cervical cancer.

"Routine cervical cancer screening is the most effective way to detect cervical cancer early," said Faith Sandberg-Rodriguez, associate commissioner of Family Clinical Services at HHSC. "However, many potentially eligible Texas women may not know about services in their area or experience other barriers to accessing care. HHSC helps low-income women access timely cervical cancer screening and diagnostic services."

Cervical cancer is the third-leading cancer diagnosis for women ages 20-39 and fifth-leading for women ages 40-49. According to the Texas Cancer Registry, an estimated 1,489 Texas women were diagnosed with cervical cancer. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend cervical cancer screenings for women ages 21-65.

The HHSC Breast and Cervical Cancer Services (BCCS) program provides low-cost and free women's health services for uninsured and underinsured Texas women who meet eligibility requirements. Services include cervical and breast cancer screenings, clinical breast examinations, mammograms and breast biopsies.

BCCS helps fund clinics across the state that provide these lifesaving screening and diagnostic services. In fiscal year 2022, BCCS served 30,422 women, including 5,717 women who received cervical cancer screenings.

The BCCS program is partly funded through the CDC. The National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program awards funding to states for early detection of cervical and breast cancers. For fiscal year 2024, the federal program awarded BCCS more than \$8.3 million. The Texas Legislature appropriated an additional \$3.4 million in state funding.

To find BCCS providers or learn more about women's health services, visit the Healthy Texas Women website or call 2-1-1. For more information on how breast and cervical cancer services are provided to Texas women, view "Breast and Cervical Cancer Services: 2023 Statewide Look."

About National Cervical Health Awareness Month

National Cervical Health Awareness Month is observed in January in the U.S. Efforts throughout the month raise awareness about cervical cancer and provide education about prevention, screening and treatments. More information about cervical cancer is posted on the CDC website.

[Texas Health Commission Urges Women To Prioritize Cervical Cancer Screenings During National Awareness Month](#)

Irving Weekly



HHS in the NEWS

#TeamTexasHHS ★ #TexasHHS Proud

January 8, 2024

In observance of National Cervical Health Awareness Month this January, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) is urging women to undergo cervical cancer screenings.

Faith Sandberg-Rodriguez, associate commissioner of Family Clinical Services at HHSC, emphasized the importance of routine screenings, stating, "Routine cervical cancer screening is the most effective way to detect cervical cancer early." Sandberg-Rodriguez highlighted that some eligible Texas women might be unaware of available services or face barriers to accessing care, and HHSC aims to assist low-income women in obtaining timely cervical cancer screening and diagnostic services.

Cervical cancer ranks as the third-leading cancer diagnosis for women aged 20-39 and the fifth-leading for those aged 40-49. According to the Texas Cancer Registry, approximately 1,489 Texas women were diagnosed with cervical cancer. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends cervical cancer screenings for women aged 21-65.

The HHSC Breast and Cervical Cancer Services (BCCS) program offers low-cost and free women's health services for uninsured and underinsured Texas women who meet eligibility requirements. Services include cervical and breast cancer screenings, clinical breast examinations, mammograms, and breast biopsies.

BCCS supports clinics statewide that provide these crucial screening and diagnostic services. In the fiscal year 2022, BCCS served 30,422 women, including 5,717 who received cervical cancer screenings.

Partly funded through the CDC, the BCCS program receives support from the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program, which allocated over \$8.3 million for fiscal year 2024. The Texas Legislature also contributed an additional \$3.4 million in state funding.

To locate BCCS providers or gather more information on women's health services, individuals can visit the Healthy Texas Women website or call 2-1-1. Further details on how breast and cervical cancer services are provided to Texas women can be found in the "Breast and Cervical Cancer Services: 2023 Statewide Look" document.

[HHSC encourages cancer screenings during Cervical Health Awareness Month](#)

Victoria Reyes

KAMR-TV

January 8, 2024

The Texas Health and Human Services Commission is encouraging women during the month of January to get screened for cervical cancer as part of National Cervical Health Awareness Month.



According to the HHSC, the HHSC Breast and Cervical Cancer Services program provides low-cost and free women's health services for uninsured and underinsured Texas women who meet eligibility requirements. Services include cervical and breast cancer screenings, clinical breast examinations, mammograms, and breast biopsies.

The HHSC said cervical cancer is the third-leading cancer diagnosis for women ages 20-39 and fifth-leading for women ages 40-49.

"According to the Texas Cancer Registry, an estimated 1,489 Texas women were diagnosed with cervical cancer. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends cervical cancer screenings for women ages 21-65," said the HHSC.

The HHSC also said that the BCCS program helps fund clinics across the state that provide these lifesaving screening and diagnostic services. In fiscal year 2022, BCCS served 30,422 women, including 5,717 women who received cervical cancer screenings.

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[HHSC encourages cancer screenings during Cervical Health Awareness Month](#)

Jacksonville Progress

January 16, 2024

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HHS in the NEWS

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HHSC encourages cancer screenings during Cervical Health Awareness Month

Cleburne Times-Review
January 16, 2024

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CNHI News

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HHS in the NEWS

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[January | Cervical Health Awareness Month](#)

Dallas Express

January 12, 2024

January is Cervical Health Awareness Month and health authorities are spreading the word to encourage women to get screened for cervical cancer.

A news release from the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) urged Texans to educate themselves on this common form of cancer impacting women from about the age of 20. An estimated 464 Texas women died from cervical cancer in 2023 while roughly 1,489 more were diagnosed with this largely preventable disease.

The human papillomavirus infection is the cause of nearly every case of cervical cancer, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This is a prevalent virus spread through sexual contact with an infected person, yet women — preferably under age 26 — can be vaccinated against it.

Otherwise, it is possible to reduce one's risk of cervical cancer through not smoking, practicing safe sex by using condoms, and maintaining a healthy weight, since being obese has been associated with higher odds of not being screened for this disease.

Overall, obesity — a rampant public health issue in the U.S., where nearly 42% of Americans are obese — has been shown to increase one's risk of developing several cancers, as reported by The Dallas Express.



The early detection of cervical cancer is critical to have a more favorable outcome. Yet since symptoms — which include bleeding or unusual discharge — typically do not manifest themselves until the cancer is already well advanced, gynecological checks for cancerous cells are important.

“Routine cervical cancer screening is the most effective way to detect cervical cancer early,” said Faith Sandberg-Rodriguez, HHSC’s associate commissioner of Family Clinical Services.

“However, many potentially eligible Texas women may not know about services in their area or experience other barriers to accessing care. HHSC helps low-income women access timely cervical cancer screening and diagnostic services.”

HHSC’s Breast and Cervical Cancer Services program, which is funded by both the state and the CDC, helps eligible Texas women receive low-cost and free women’s health services, including cervical cancer screenings, in clinics across the state.

El Paso SSLC Cuts Ribbon on New Sports Complex

[El Paso SSLC opens \\$550,000 sports complex for residents with special needs](#)

Drew Pittock

KDBC-TV

January 18, 2024

The El Paso State Supported Living Center (El Paso SSLC) unveiled its new sports complex Thursday, where the center's community of differently-abled residents can shoot hoops, score goals and hit home runs.

The Texas Health and Human Services Commission hosted a ribbon cutting Thursday, to celebrate a new sports complex at El Paso SSLC.

The \$550,000 sports complex features a basketball court -- which doubles as a soccer pitch -- as well as a baseball field adjacent to the court, allowing El Paso SSLC residents to "meaningfully engage with each other and build comradery," SSLC said in a statement.

El Paso SSLC, home to almost 100 residents, provides campus-based direct services and support to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Residents receive 24/7 residential services in a structured environment.



Services include personalized behavioral treatment, primary and specialty health care, psychiatric services, dental care, skills training, day habilitation and employment services, as well as customized adaptive aids such as seating and positioning devices.

The ribbon-cutting ceremony was attended by representatives of the Marathon Petroleum Corporation, which donated a \$46,000 grant for new sports equipment, uniforms and apparel for the organization's residents and employees.

Meanwhile, the El Paso SSLC Police Department participated in a baseball game with residents, and Chico the Chihuahua threw out the first pitch.

[HHSC celebrates new sports complex at EP State Supported Living Center](#)

Luisa Barrios

KTSM-TV El Paso

January 18, 2024

The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony Thursday, Jan. 18, to celebrate the completion of a new sports complex at the El Paso State Supported Living Center (SSLC).

The \$550,000 complex features a basketball court where residents can also play soccer, and a baseball field adjacent to the court, according to a press release sent by HHSC.

The sports complex supports a growing activity at El Paso SSLC, as nearly one-third of its residents play baseball on the Desert Yankees team in the Miracle League of El Paso, according to the press release.

Additionally, the Marathon Community Investments Program awarded a \$46,000 grant for new sports equipment, uniforms and apparel.

"Sports can help foster a sense of teamwork, accomplishment and community for our residents, plus they're just a great excuse to get outside and have some fun," said Scott Schalchlin, deputy executive commissioner of the HHSC Health and Specialty Care System. "Thanks to the support of lawmakers and the El Paso community, the residents of El Paso State Supported Living Center will get a chance to play in modern facilities that will help foster their love of the game. Go Desert Yankees!"

"We couldn't be more excited for our new multisport complex opening at the El Paso State Supported Living Center," said Laura Moore, director of El Paso SSLC. "This is a beautiful complex that will help engage, unite and boost the morale of our residents and staff. We're eager to get out there and enjoy some basketball, baseball, soccer and many other activities because of it."



[El Paso SSLC opens \\$550,000 sports complex for residents with special needs](#)

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[A short story of hope](#)

Avery Escamilla-Wendell

The Prospector Daily

January 30, 2024

Laughter, smiles and fun echoed through the El Paso State Supported Living Center (EPSSLC) as the facility officially opened its new sports complex. After 49 years, a once dirt patch finally turned into an outdoor complex, which includes a basketball court, baseball field, soccer goal and other equipment for residents to enjoy.

Laura Morre, the facility director for the EPSSLC, shares the history behind the facility.

"We were established in 1973, however, we got our first individual receiving services in 1974, which means this is our 50th anniversary this year," Moore said.

The living center provides 24/7 care, housing, food and opportunities for adults with intellectual disabilities.

"The State supported living center is what's referred to as an intermediate care facility and what we do is we provide 24/7 care for adults with intellectual disabilities," Moore said. "A lot of our individuals here, they either have high medical needs in addition to the intellectual disability or they have behavioral needs in addition to the intellectual disability."

At the living center, families can be at peace because they know support is provided to 100 individuals for 24 hours a day. A medical clinic, psychiatry department, dental department and vocational services are many of the services provided for residents on campus. Many of the residents work in vocational services on campus to earn money or even out in the community. The goal of the facility is to prepare residents to live out in the community.

"About five years ago, the previous administration had requested to have something built and it was determined that a sports complex would be the most ideal," Moore said. "That way it kind of brings all the individuals out, keeps them engaged; we also are part of the Miracle League here which is a baseball league that our individuals participate with folks in the community, and so it just made sense that we would have sports."

On Jan. 18, the official ribbon cutting brought out Chico from the Chihuahuas after the new partnership between the EPSSLC and the baseball team and resident, Carol, had the opportunity to sing "Take me out to the ball game" at the ceremony.

"Yeah, I was singing over here, singing notes," Carol said.

Moore hopes to bring out the El Paso community to play sports alongside the residents someday. It's an opportunity that would leave lasting memories for the residents. Moore also plans to purchase a volleyball net for residents who want to play.



"What I'm hoping to get out of this is you students to become a part of our family here and maybe volunteer to come out and play volleyball with our individuals, if you want to play baseball, come play baseball," Moore said.

Having a new sports complex brings new hopes and happiness for residents living on site.

"We're excited to be able to give that to them because they're going to be our superstars," Moore said. "They're going to be our champions and we get the opportunity to be proud for them."

At the opening ceremony, the El Paso Police Department visited and played against the residents. Moore stated that many of the residents who live on-site have had a previous history with law enforcement. However, Moore says EPPD visiting and playing sports with the residents may have helped residents perceive law enforcement in a much more peaceful way and changing the overall narrative.

With residents' past and obstacles, they have faced throughout their lives, residents remain hopeful for a better future. Moore invites and encourages the community to come out and play their favorite sport with residents at the EPSSLC sports complex at 6700 Delta Drive. For more information contact the living center at 915-782-6300.

DSHS Launches New Virus Dashboard

[Texas DSHS launches new respiratory virus dashboard](#)

Morgan McGrath

KVUE-TV

January 22, 2024

Coughing, sneezing and sore throats are all the more common during the winter months.

As cold and flu season reaches its peak, the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) has created a way to track influenza – more commonly known as the flu – COVID-19 and RSV all in one place.

The new online dashboard can be found on the Texas DSHS website. Those interested can track hospitalizations, visits to the emergency room and even deaths related to the "big three" respiratory viruses.

"Those data points demonstrate the diseases' most severe effects on people, communities and the health care system," DSHS Commissioner Jennifer Shuford, MD, MPH, said. "The dashboard provides a near real-time look at conditions so people can make informed decisions on precautions for



themselves and their families and health care professionals can make recommendations to their patients."

The DSHS is also publishing a weekly respiratory virus surveillance report, which combines separate reports on the flu, COVID-19 and RSV. The reports also show counties where different types of flu have been found, proportions of COVID-19 variants present across the state and more. View the most recent report, produced on Jan. 19.

[Texas DSHS launches new respiratory virus dashboard](#)

Zachary Yates

KCEN-TV

January 22, 2024

The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) has launched the Texas Respiratory Illness Interactive Dashboard, which follows trends in illnesses such as influenza, COVID-19 and RSV.

This dashboard is accessible to the public through the DSHS's Texas Health Data site and it will show data such as emergency room visits, hospitalizations and deaths in relation to respiratory illnesses.

DSHS Commissioner Jennifer Shuford stated, "Those data points demonstrate the diseases' most severe effects on people, communities and the health care system. The dashboard provides a near real-time look at conditions, so people can make informed decisions on precautions for themselves and their families, and health care professionals can make recommendations to their patients."

In-depth reports will come out weekly as the DSHS monitors these respiratory viruses. These reports will show counties where various types of the flu and COVID-19 have been reported.

To learn more information about this dashboard, visit [here](#).

[Texas Launches New Respiratory Virus Dashboard](#)

Focus Daily News

January 22, 2024

The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) today announced it had launched new data tools to empower people to keep tabs on respiratory viruses in Texas.

In Texas, respiratory virus season runs from October to May and usually peaks in the winter. However, these viruses create health risks at any time of year.



HHS in the NEWS

#TeamTexasHHS ★ #TexasHHS Proud

Launched on January 22, 2024, the respiratory virus dashboard accessible through DSHS's Texas Health Data site shows trends in illnesses from influenza, COVID-19, and Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), the respiratory viruses most likely to cause serious disease at this time of year.

Updated each Friday, this innovative dashboard's data includes emergency room visits, hospitalizations, and deaths.

"Those data points demonstrate the diseases' most severe effects on people, communities, and the health care system," said DSHS Commissioner Jennifer Shuford, MD, MPH, in a press release.

"The dashboard provides a near real-time look at conditions so that people can make informed decisions on precautions for themselves and their families, and health care professionals can make recommendations to their patients."

DSHS is also publishing a new weekly respiratory virus surveillance report, combining separate reports on influenza, COVID-19, and RSV.

The report contains more in-depth data on the three diseases, including, but not limited to, information on the burden of influenza-like illness (ILI), counties where different types of flu have been found, and the proportions of COVID-19 variants present in Texas.

As of January 19, 2024, compared to the previous week, the updated surveillance report confirmed the following:

The percentage of specimens testing positive for influenza reported by hospital laboratories has increased.

The percentage of patient visits due to ILI has decreased.

No influenza-associated pediatric deaths were reported.

Ten influenza-associated institutional outbreaks were reported in long-term care facilities.

Furthermore, the Walgreens Flu Index® only listed Tyler-Longview and El Paso, Texas, in its top ten cities reporting influenza medication dispensing.

Getting immunized against respiratory viruses is a good way for people to protect themselves against the severe disease, hospitalization, and death they can cause, wrote DSHS.

According to recent U.S. CDC data, the national percentage of the population reporting receipt of COVID-19, influenza, and RSV vaccines remains low for children and adults.



The percent of the population reporting receipt of the updated 2023-24 COVID-19 vaccine is 11% for children and 21.5% for adults 18+, including 40.9% among adults age 65+.

The percent of the population reporting receipt of a flu vaccine is 47.5%, and influenza vaccination coverage among pregnant women as of December 2023 is about 3% points lower compared to the end of December 2022 (36% Vs. 39%),

The percentage of adults aged 60+ who report receiving an RSV vaccine is 21.1%.

As of January 22, 2024, various respiratory vaccines remain available at most pharmacies in Texas.

Texas launches new respiratory illness dashboard

Carter Diggs

KVIA-TV

January 22, 2024

The Texas Department of State Health Services launched a new respiratory virus dashboard to let people keep tabs on respiratory viruses in Texas. The dashboard, accessible through DSHS's Texas Health Data site, shows trends in illnesses from influenza, COVID-19 and RSV. Data includes emergency room visits, hospitalizations and deaths.

"Those data points demonstrate the diseases' most severe effects on people, communities and the health care system," DSHS Commissioner Jennifer Shuford said. "The dashboard provides a near real-time look at conditions, so people can make informed decisions on precautions for themselves and their families, and health care professionals can make recommendations to their patients."

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Texas Publishes 'Big Three' Respiratory Virus Trends and Insights

Robert Carlson, MD

Precision Vaccinations

January 22, 2024

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HHS in the NEWS

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[Texas launches dashboard to track the 'big three' respiratory viruses](#)

Idolina Peralez

CW-39 Houston

January 30, 2024

The Texas Department of State Health Services has launched new data tools to let people keep tabs on respiratory viruses in Texas.

The dashboard shows trends in illnesses from influenza, COVID-19 and RSV, or the “big three” respiratory viruses most likely to cause serious disease at this time of year. Data includes emergency room visits, hospitalizations, and deaths.

“Those data points demonstrate the diseases’ most severe effects on people, communities and the health care system,” said DSHS Commissioner Jennifer Shuford, MD, MPH. “The dashboard provides a near real-time look at conditions, so people can make informed decisions on precautions for themselves and their families, and health care professionals can make recommendations to their patients.”

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Respiratory virus season runs from October to May and usually peaks in the winter. However, there is a risk of infection at any time of year as the viruses circulate year round.



HHS in the NEWS

#TeamTexasHHS ★ #TexasHHS Proud

DSHS says the best protection is getting immunized against respiratory viruses to help prevent severe disease, hospitalization and death they can cause.

Additional actions to stop the spread of these viruses are:

Washing hands frequently with soap and water,
Covering coughs and sneezes,
Staying home when sick.