

## Recommendation 6

# Maximize Outreach through Clear and Targeted Communications

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### 1. Start outreach early and use multiple modalities

The implementation of work requirements will be confusing for recipients, at best. Recipients will need to be aware of new rules and procedures to keep their health care and the stakes are high – gaps in coverage will lead to missed care or medical debt. The Department of Human Services (DHS) should develop a robust and multi-pronged outreach plan to effectively message to Medicaid recipients and new applicants the new rules and the steps that must be taken to maintain coverage.

To do so, DHS should communicate frequently through differing modalities as work requirements are rolling out. DHS should plan to use every communication tool at its disposal to get the message out, including:

- Texting
- MyCOMPASS messages
- Paper notices
- Email
- Social media
- Earned media
- Video messages
- Web page
- Written materials that can be shared widely
- Outreach through community organizations
- Engagement of elected officials/legislative newsletters
- Outreach through MCOs
- Engagement of other state agencies (e.g., Aging, Labor & Industry)

To get the message through, repetition is key. DHS should start early and continue it with frequency by sending a message about work requirements at least once a month until everyone in the expansion population has had their first renewal under the work requirements.

In encouraging community organizations and other trusted messengers to get the word out, DHS should create a toolkit, including training, to help partners easily and accurately message to their constituents about upcoming changes.

DHS may also need to develop templates or other messaging to help address misconceptions and false narratives about Medicaid, SNAP, and other benefits to both dispel those narratives and to ensure potential recipients know the programs are available to them despite changes.

### 2. Use language and formatting that people understand

DHS should use the following strategies so that people can understand its messaging and successfully act:

- **Use plain language and talk like a human.** Avoid words like “verification”, “verify”, “readability”, “exemptions”, “readable”, “notified”, “category”, and “subcategory” which are bureaucratic and technical; recipients and applicants may not clearly understand what they must do or why when faced with such terminology. Instead, explain the concepts behind words. For example, instead of using the word “exemption,” say, “you don’t have to meet the new rules if you have a child under 14, are taking care of a disabled child or adult, are pregnant or postpartum, etc.” Appropriate plain language also makes the message easier for non-native English speakers to read and can also improve the accuracy of translation.
- **Translate communication materials** into at least the 9 major languages that the PA600 is already available in.
- **Make the action the largest text on the page or screen.** Use language that makes the consequences clear. For example, *“If you do not report, you will lose benefits.”*
- **Streamline the copy, reduce visual clutter, and improve visual hierarchy:** For example, What is this, what do I have to do, when do I have to do it, where can I get help. Use clear headings, short sentences, and short paragraphs. Make the most important messages stand out. Don’t use all caps or underlines.
- Focus on one behavior and highlight a single action.
- **Send the messages to the appropriate audience.** Do not send an eblast to every Medicaid recipient. Sending messages to a broader audience will create mass confusion and drive people to the Customer Service Centers and other DHS phone numbers. For example, within the expansion population, do not send messages about needing to report work or an exemption to people already identified as exempt.
- **Develop short videos and tutorials on how to apply, how to report, how to renew.** Use plain language, not bureaucratic terms in the videos. At a minimum, offer them in Spanish, Russian, Vietnamese and Chinese.