




Arkansas





2021 Healthcare Affordability Policy Checklist

KEY



-  = implemented by state
-  = the state has implemented policies, but could improve
-  = not implemented by state

Polling data repeatedly shows that healthcare affordability is the number one issue that state residents, on both sides of the political aisle, want their policymakers to work on. This checklist identifies areas where Arkansas is doing well and areas where it can improve.





1. CURB EXCESS HEALTHCARE PRICES:

- Implement free, public-facing healthcare price transparency that reflects negotiated rates and features treatment- and provider-specific prices. 
- Create an all-payer or multi-payer claims database to analyze healthcare price inflation, price variation and utilization. 
- Create a permanently convened health spending oversight entity.¹ 
- Create all-payer healthcare spending and quality benchmarks for the state. 





2. REDUCE LOW-VALUE CARE:

- Require validated patient-safety reporting for hospitals.² **N/A**
- Universally implement antibiotic stewardship programs using CDC's 7 Core Elements.³ 
- Analyze claims and EHR data to understand how much is spent on low- and no-value services. 

3. EXTEND COVERAGE TO ALL RESIDENTS:

- Expand Medicaid to cover adults up to 138% of the federal poverty level.⁴ 
- Provide high-quality, affordable coverage options for people whose incomes are too high to qualify for Medicaid, e.g., Basic Health Plan, reinsurance or augmented premium subsidies. 
- Provide options for immigrants that don't qualify for the coverage above.⁵ 
- Conduct strong rate review of fully insured, private market options.⁶ 

4. MAKE OUT-OF-POCKET COSTS AFFORDABLE:

- Protect patients from inadvertent surprise out-of-network medical bills.⁷ 
- Limit the availability of short-term, limited-duration health plans. 
- Waive or reduce cost-sharing for high-value services. 
- Require insurers in a state-based exchange to offer evidence-based standard plan designs. 

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Additional detail is available at:

WWW.HEALTHCAREVALUEHUB.ORG/AFFORDABILITY-SCORECARD/ARKANSAS

NOTES

1. The Arkansas Health Care Payment Improvement Initiative is the only statewide payment reform that involves all major public and private payers. The initiative aligns bundled payments across Medicare, Medicaid, private insurers and some self-insured employers, like Wal-Mart, and is designed to reward physicians, hospitals and other providers who give patients high-quality care at an appropriate cost. See: <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hblog20160428.054672/full/>.
2. Central line-associated bloodstream infections (CLABSI) and catheter-associated urinary tract infections (CAUTI) are two common forms of hospital-acquired infections. Data on patient safety reporting is not available for Arkansas. For more information, see: https://www.cdc.gov/hai/data/portal/progress-report.html#Data_tables.
3. 91% of AR hospitals have adopted antibiotic stewardship. For more information, see: <https://www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use/stewardship-report/current.html>.
4. AR sought federal approval in 2021 to replace its current Medicaid expansion program, AR Works, with the AR HOME program. If approved, AR HOME would allow expansion enrollees who comply with work requirements and monthly premiums to enroll in private marketplace plans. Enrollees who opt out of these requirements would receive traditional fee-for-service Medicaid coverage. AR Works is set to expire at the end of 2021 and has faced legal challenges.
5. Arkansas provides coverage to lawfully residing pregnant women and children without a 5-year wait, and to undocumented pregnant women.
6. AR has effective rate review as classified by CMS, but does not incorporate affordability criteria into rate review.
7. The federal No Surprises Act prohibits surprise medical billing in most plans effective January 2022. However, it does not cover ground ambulances which often result in surprise bills for consumers. An analysis by Johns Hopkins University conducted specially for Altarum revealed that 67% of ground ambulance rides in AR charged to commercial insurance plans had the potential for surprise medical billing. (had a small sample size [1247] compared to other states, so interpret percentage with caution.



ABOUT ALTARUM'S HEALTHCARE VALUE HUB

With support from Arnold Ventures and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Healthcare Value Hub provides free, timely information about the policies and practices that address high healthcare costs and poor quality, bringing better value to consumers. The Hub is part of Altarum, a nonprofit organization with the mission of creating a better, more sustainable future for all Americans by applying research-based and field-tested solutions that transform our systems of health and healthcare.

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