



## Medicaid Expansion Good for Adults between ages 50 and 64

The new health care law expands the Medicaid program to provide healthcare for millions of uninsured low-income adults. The Supreme Court ruled in June that states can choose whether or not to accept the Medicaid expansion. An expansion would allow many low-income uninsured adults eligible for Medicaid or for subsidized health coverage through the new health benefit exchange. This population without dependent children are more likely to be uninsured than are any other Americans.<sup>1</sup>

- The number of uninsured adults has been on the rise in recent years. In 2009, 8.6 million adults ages 50 to 64 were uninsured. That amount increased by 1.1 million from 2008.<sup>2</sup> In South Carolina there are 65,000 uninsured adults in this age group that would be eligible for the Medicaid expansion.
- Escalating costs of health care has made access to acceptable and affordable health care coverage problematic for many in this age group. Without the coverage and/or treatment, they are faced with declining health and insufficient care, consequences that will follow many of them into Medicare.<sup>3</sup>
- Many older adults in South Carolina are at risk for chronic health conditions. Many may not have health coverage to pay for such care. Surveys show that chronic health conditions are associated with higher total health costs, and an increased number of chronic health conditions increases total health costs.<sup>3</sup> A Medicaid expansion in South Carolina will reduce the number of adults in this age group who do not currently have the health care they need.
  - Today more than 70 million Americans ages 50 and older (4 out of 5 older adults) suffer from at least one chronic condition.
  - More than half of older adults have more than one chronic condition, and 11 million live with five or more chronic conditions.
  - Over 40 percent of all older Americans have high blood pressure, and more than one in four has high cholesterol.
  - Almost 20 percent of older Americans suffer from some sort of mental illness.
  - Almost 15 percent have diabetes.
- According to one report, 40% of uninsured low-income adults in South Carolina have an income at or below 200% of Federal Poverty Level guidelines.<sup>4</sup>
- South Carolina is among states that has the total number of uninsured older adults above the national average.<sup>1</sup>

1. Stan Dorn, et al., Medicaid and Other Public Programs for Low-Income Childless Adults: An Overview of Coverage in Eight States. Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured (August 2004). Available at <http://www.kff.org/medicaid/loader.cfm?url=/commonspot/security/getfile.cfm&pageid=46175>
2. Sarah R. Collins, et al., Realizing Health Reform's Potential: Adults Ages 50-64 and the Affordable Care Act of 2010. (December 2010). Available at :  
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4. Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured. Expanding Health Coverage for Low-Income Adults: Filling the Gaps in Medicaid Eligibility. (May 2009). Available at:  
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