

A Newsletter of WV Birth To Three Regional Administrative Unit 7



MEDICAID CHANGES ARE COMING, BE PREPARED

Starting **January 1, 2027**, West Virginia Medicaid introduces mandatory **Community Engagement (work) requirements** for certain adults. Enrollees ages 19–64 in the **Medicaid Expansion Group** must complete at least 80 hours per month of work, schooling, volunteering, or work programs, unless exempt.

The main exceptions include:

- **Medical Frailty & Disability:** People with serious or complex medical conditions, physical or intellectual disabilities, substance-use disorders, or disabling mental health disorders.
- **Caregivers:** Those who look after a dependent child under age 14 or an individual with a disability.
- **Pregnant & Postpartum:** Women who are pregnant or receiving postpartum Medicaid coverage.
- **Veterans:** Veterans who have a total disability rating from the Department of Veterans Affairs.
- **Age:** People under age 19 or age 65 and older.
- **Students:** Those enrolled in school or a training program at least half-time.
- **Recently Incarcerated:** Individuals who are currently in jail/prison or were released within the last three months.
- **Other Federal Rules:** People already meeting work requirements for SNAP (food stamps) or TANF, or who are registered in a government-operated drug/alcohol treatment program.

Even with these exceptions, navigating the paperwork can be tricky. Experts warn that many people who qualify for an exception may lose their Medicaid coverage simply because they do not understand the complex process or fail to report their status on time. Let's stay on top of the changes and be prepared. Knowledge is power!

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Protecting Kids from Heat Illness

- Never leave your child in a parked car, even if the windows are open.
- Offer sips of water and remind your child to drink often, even before they ask for it.
- Offer your child water-rich foods like watermelon, spinach, berries, cucumber.
- Take your child to cooling centers, malls, or other air-conditioned places.
- Do not use fans when the temperature inside your home is above 90° F (32°C), because they don't cool the air and can make your body hotter.
- Mist or sponge your child's skin with water to cool them off more quickly. Always supervise children in baths or pools.
- Let kids play outside during cooler times of the day (early morning and later evening). Make sure your child takes frequent breaks to cool off, rest, and drink.
- Dress your child in loose, light-colored clothing.
- Make sure play structures (like slides and swings) and the ground aren't hot before your child plays and make sure your child wears shoes on hot playground surfaces to avoid burning.



Playful Parenting: The Benefits of Roughhousing with Your Children

Rough-and-tumble play is important in children's development. One of the most significant benefits is that it strengthens the bond between children and their parents, promoting a close connection essential for healthy development. The bold claim is that active, physical play, like roughhousing "makes kids smarter, emotionally intelligent, socially intelligent, ethical, physically fit, and joyful." (DeBenedet & Cohen, 2023) So whether you love barrel rolling with your children down a hill or feel uneasy about roughhousing, there is a growing body of evidence pointing to its importance in children's development.

What Roughhousing Really Is

Real roughhousing is physically active play that's joyful but a little risky. The shrieks of laughter are part of the fun. Although there might be one parent who's more likely to engage in roughhousing, everyone should feel invited to join in, even (or especially) pairs of children and small groups of kids without adults.

The key is that all participants are willing. Usually, there is an arc of play in which kids start slow, get revved up and then calm down. Ideally, you should allow this cycle to run its course. Otherwise, kids will be out of sync and their mood and behavior can be affected. As early as the toddler years, children may start to try out this type of rowdy play. By around age 3 or 4, kid-led roughhousing is at its peak, but it continues all the way up to age 9 or 10 and can even benefit kids older than that.

The 6 Benefits of Roughhousing

Anthony DeBenedet, M.D., is a physician and dad who's on a mission to promote rough-and-tumble play and wrote a book on the topic. He and other doctors and research scientists have identified some of the unexpected ways that horseplay helps kids learn and grow by giving them:

- **Bigger, better brains** - Intense, physical play stimulates and helps develop areas of the brain that control emotional memory, language and logic helping them do better in school and have better relationships with friends.
- **Self-control** - Adults (usually without even thinking about it) hold back some of their strength and force them to keep things safer for everyone. Kids pick up on that to learn a valuable lesson about self-control and handling an imbalance of power. When kids have opportunities to roughhouse at home with loving adults, they are less likely to play too aggressively or take unsafe risks when they're away from parents' watchful eyes.
- **Social skills** - Rough-and-tumble play gives kids an opportunity to read each other's body language and facial expressions. Those are social cues all kids need to master to make and keep friends and succeed in group settings, like classrooms and teams.
- **Safe aggression** - Aggressiveness doesn't seem like a quality we want our kids to have, but they do need to learn persistence and how to take the right kinds of risks (think: sticking up for themselves if they're falsely accused of misbehavior or pushing themselves to try a challenging new sport). Kids can learn that physical contact does not have to be violent as well as gain confidence in their physical skills.
- **Flexible thinking** - Rough-and-tumble play is unpredictable, so it makes kids think on their feet (or while hanging upside-down or clinging to an adult's back). That translates into problem-solving skills like figuring out, together, what's fun and what's not helps kids learn how to negotiate and be leaders.
- **Physical fitness** - Kids tend to spend a lot of time engaged in sedentary activities, but their muscles need to move every day. Roughhousing challenges their muscles and gets kids up off the couch. Plus, it stimulates endorphins, the body's natural pain and stress fighters, as well as oxytocin, the hormone we get from physical contact, which makes us feel loved.

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Roughhousing Guidelines

The concept of roughhousing may make you nervous. When we think of children's roughhousing, we think of fighting or someone getting hurt. But parent and child horseplay is an entirely different story as there is enormous value in parent-child play. It can "unleash" many of the same benefits associated with undirected and unmonitored peer play. Children are primed to play and it's a good bet most children will be eager to having a parent's full attention.

Adults should remember these detailed guidelines for successful roughhousing:

- Don't surprise your children by starting any horseplay activity if they are not ready.
- Roughhousing has a natural arc - start calm and escalate to high intensity, always allowing for wind down before stopping.
- Avoid overstimulating your child. You can slow down by speaking softly, moving at a slower pace, or taking breaks.
- Let your child win sometimes to build the confidence a child needs when not at home.

Regular physical play can reinforce a positive family dynamic, like dancing in the living room or enjoying any other pastime together. Taking a few minutes to roughhouse - to become an elephant or elf, a bulldozer or the bearer of a magic wand - with your child pays off in the sheer joy you both feel. And, as DeBenedet and Cohen point out, studies suggest that physical play with your kids "forestalls mental decline" in adults (2023).

No matter how exhausted you feel, a quick romp revives you and adds to the family memory bank. Maybe you become the "Kissing Monster." Chasing your kids around the house to give them a kiss - not only fun but also horseplay that they will talk about for years to come.

References:

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- DeBenedet, A. T., & Cohen, L. J. (2023). *Unplug and play: The ultimate illustrated guide to roughhousing with your kids*. Quirk Books.
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- Newman, S. (2023). Benefits of roughhousing with your children: what everyone misses when parents don't engage in physical play with their kids. Retrieved from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/singletons/202304/benefits-of-roughhousing-with-your-children>.



Legal Aid of West Virginia

Legal Aid of WV work focuses on three broad program areas: Legal Services, Behavioral Health, and Long-Term Care Ombudsman.

Our advocates assist West Virginians living with mental and behavioral health disorders, by promoting community supports and preserving access to services, in turn helping them meet their challenges with dignity and hope.

Our Ombudsmen work in West Virginia's long-term and elder care facilities to ensure residents' rights are protected and upheld.

Our attorneys take civil legal cases. We do not handle criminal cases, accidents, or personal injury issues. Here are the kinds of cases we typically take:

- Domestic violence and protective orders
- Government Benefits (SNAP, Medicaid, Social Security)
- Divorce/Child Custody (in some situations and particularly when domestic violence or child safety are involved)
- Bankruptcy/Credit Problems
- Housing
- Expungement and Driver's License Problems
- Unemployment Compensation
- Veterans Issues

Legal Services, our core program, provides free legal advice and representation to vulnerable West Virginians.

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Counties Served: Fayette, Nicholas, Raleigh

Counties Served: Mercer, McDowell, Wyoming

Question? visit us online [Legal Aid WV](https://www.legalaidwv.org/)

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Encourage your child's learning and development



Strengthen parent-child relationships



Connect with community resources



Build confidence in your parenting journey



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