

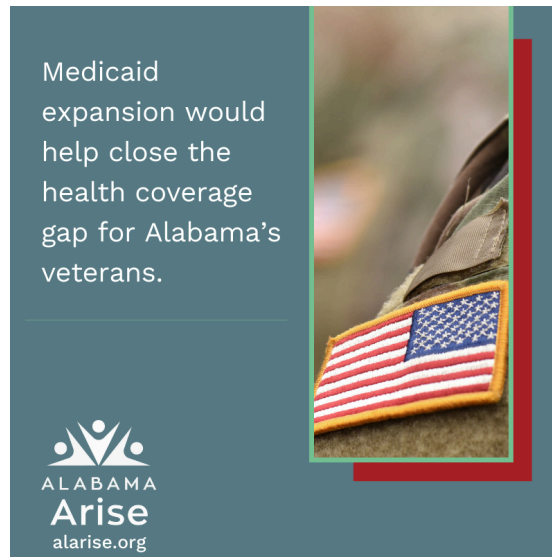
Close the health coverage gap for Alabama's veterans

By Suhas Kellampalli, public health intern

Many Alabama veterans face preventable barriers to obtaining health care. Closing our state's health coverage gap through Medicaid expansion is an essential part of the solution.

- Approximately [10,000 Alabama veterans](#) are uninsured.
 - In 2022, [half of Alabama veterans](#) who were uninsured had an income below 138% of the federal poverty level (FPL), which is the income eligibility limit for coverage through Medicaid expansion.
 - In addition to uninsurance and other barriers to accessing health care that veterans face, [VA health coverage is limited](#) as well. This is due to eligibility based on service-connected disability, income status and other service-related factors. Distance to a VA facility also poses a significant barrier that can prevent enrollment in VA health care.
 - Lack of health coverage most greatly affects the veterans who need it most. Veterans with previously existing disabilities [have a higher uninsured rate](#) than veterans in general.
- In 2022, [3,004 Alabamians on active duty for training](#) in the National Guard or Reserves were uninsured and had an income under 138% FPL.
- Expanding Medicaid will empower more of our brave servicemembers and veterans with low incomes to access health care.
 - In states that expanded Medicaid at the time, 50% of the veterans who were uninsured in 2013 [received health coverage by 2015](#). In Alabama, only a little more than 1 in 3 uninsured veterans obtained coverage in the same time period.

- In 2021, [half of all uninsured veterans](#) were from the 14 states that had not expanded Medicaid at that time.
- One veteran explained the stakes of Medicaid coverage in [a KFF report](#): “If I didn’t have Medicaid, it would be all downhill because there are not a lot of places that can afford to supply the medications that I need. Hypertension killed both my parents, so I need to take care of myself and see the doctor regularly.”



- Medicaid expansion would promote employment among veterans.
 - The employment rate for veterans will be higher in states that expand Medicaid than in states that do not, as indicated by [Urban Institute projections for 2024](#).
 - About 1 in 7 veterans (14.2%) [are employed in the service industry](#), while 13.7% work in construction and maintenance. These are among the professions where the most workers would benefit from Medicaid expansion. Closing Alabama’s coverage gap would allow more veterans to obtain and retain employment by improving their health and productivity.
- Medicaid expansion would allow veterans to have more options to receive health care.
 - Expanding Medicaid would ensure veterans have more freedom to seek health care outside of the VA system. This would allow them to receive care more promptly while reducing wait times in VA facilities for other veterans.
 - The number of VA health system outpatient visits [would decrease by 12%](#) if all states expanded Medicaid.