

REALITY CHECK

# THE COSTS OF LIVING FOR MEDICAID BENEFICIARIES IN TENNESSEE



Challenging Math for People Living with Disabling Mental Illness and Substance Use Disorders

## WHAT "COUNTS" AS POVERTY?

According to the federal government, poverty is a single person earning \$12,060 or less per year. This equals \$1,005 per month. In Tennessee,

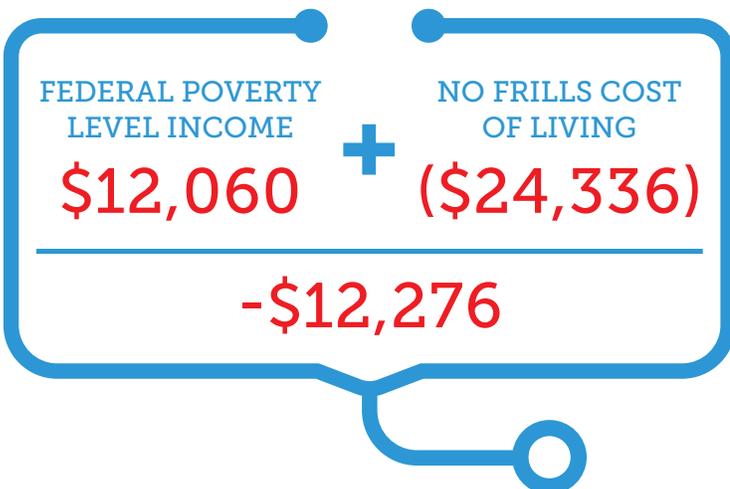
- 985,400 Tennesseans live at or below the Federal Poverty Level
- 1,339,600 Tennesseans live between 100-199% of the Federal Poverty Level



## WHO QUALIFIES FOR MEDICAID?

- In Tennessee, individuals with incomes above \$8,796 cannot qualify for Medicaid, unless they receive Social Security Disability Benefits.
- Medicaid is the primary source of health care for people living with mental illness and a growing resource for people living with addiction.

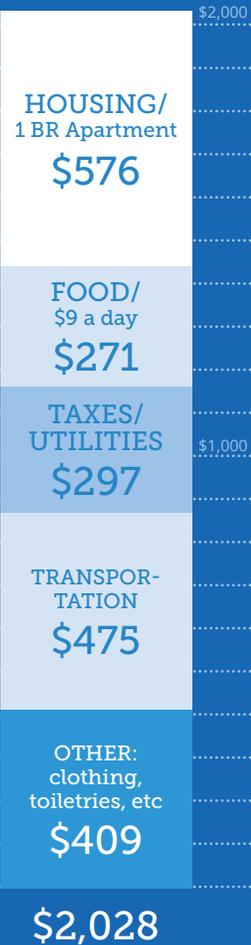
### REAL NUMBERS, HARD MATH



## THE REAL COSTS OF LIVING IN MEMPHIS, TN

A no-frills budget, excluding health care costs, for an individual in Memphis is \$24,336.

The cost of living in rural Tennessee is \$199 less per month.





Many states have increased cost-sharing requirements for Medicaid recipients. Cost sharing can include copayments, cost-sharing and monthly premiums.



For people with significant health care needs and who are living in poverty, cost-sharing can prevent access to effective and essential services.



After increasing cost-sharing and premiums in Tennessee, Oregon and Wisconsin, significant numbers of people left the health care program and resorted to the emergency room for care. Further, the administrative costs of the program may exceed the funds received from enrollees.



**THE PRICE OF INCREASING COST-SHARING IN MEDICAID DOESN'T ADD UP**

## WHAT IS?

### **SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESS AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS**

More than 1 in 5 uninsured adults with an opioid addiction have a serious mental illness.

Nationally, uninsured adults are less likely to have received treatment for addiction than those covered by Medicaid.

In Tennessee, over 284,000 people have a serious mental illness, including schizophrenia, bipolar disorder or depression. These conditions often impact a person's ability to communicate with others, take care of themselves, and understand the world around them.

By 2015, over 2 million people were addicted to prescription opioids and 591,000 people were addicted to heroin. In Tennessee alone, 1,457 people lost their lives to drug overdoses, a 13 percent increase over the previous year, and one of the higher rates in the nation.

## WHAT IS?

### **SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME (SSI) AND SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY INSURANCE (SSDI)**

People diagnosed with a serious mental illness often qualify for Medicaid through their eligibility for Social Security disability benefits. Individuals who qualify for SSDI receive on average \$13,578 per year, and those who qualify for SSI receive up to \$8,820 per year. SSDI and SSI are provided to individuals who cannot work due to a serious medical or mental illness, condition, or injury. In most states, eligibility for SSI confers eligibility for Medicaid. Generally, SSDI recipients are eligible for Medicare after two years, but may also qualify for Medicaid.