

Strengthening the Federal Approach on COVID-19 to Meet the Needs of Low-Income Older Adults and People with Disabilities



Low-income older adults and people with disabilities, many of whom have complex health needs, are among those most at risk during the coronavirus pandemic, yet they are additionally facing challenges accessing the non-COVID-19 health and social supports they need to stay safe and well. Moreover, data shows that Black Americans and other people of color face alarming and [highly disproportionate rates of infection and death](#) in states throughout the country. At Community Catalyst and the Center, we are working with partners at all levels to educate and influence decision makers on their development of the next federal package of policies to address COVID-19 and to focus on the needs of these populations.

The cornerstones of our [federal advocacy work](#) are:

- **Investing in Medicaid:** Including advocating for the federal government to increase its share of funding for the program, known as FMAP (federal medical assistance percentage) in a way that helps all states absorb new demand, including those that have not yet expanded Medicaid.

AND

- **Centering Equity:** Including strongly advocating for transparent disaggregated data that will allow for community recovery and help us in identifying and responding to historic and longstanding health inequities.

Additionally, our recommendations include many that are specific to meeting the health and social needs of older adults and people with disabilities during the pandemic. These include:

- Ensuring beneficiaries can access vital Medicaid services by increasing funding for the Coronavirus Provider Relief Fund and **directing at least 30 percent to critical Medicaid providers.**
- Allowing greater numbers of older adults and people with disabilities to receive important services in the community by **expanding state home and community-based services waivers.**
- Providing a **continuous special enrollment period (SEP) for dual eligible beneficiaries** to mitigate disruptions in access to care.
- Protecting access to the [home care services](#) many older adults and people with disabilities rely on by ensuring **home care providers have access** to necessary personal protective equipment, as well as adequate pay and benefits.
- Ensuring older adults and people with disabilities [aren't denied life-saving care](#) by directing the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) to issue **guidance on what constitutes unlawful discrimination** on the basis of disability and age.
- Improving **food security** for vulnerable populations by boosting SNAP benefits and suspending all SNAP administrative rules that would terminate or weaken benefits.

You can view Community Catalyst's full list of federal recommendations [here](#). Our messaging points on how to address the dramatic racial inequities we are seeing in the nation's response to the pandemic are [here](#).