

THE AHCCCS BENEFIT PACKAGE

Does federal law have minimum requirements for the AHCCCS benefit package?

Yes. Federal law lists what benefits are mandatory for state Medicaid programs, together with which benefits are optional.

What benefits are a mandatory under federal law?

Federal law stipulates those benefits that are mandatory for state coverage. These benefits are outlined in the State Plan and include inpatient hospital services, outpatient hospital services, Early and Periodic Screening and Diagnostic Testing (EPSDT) for children, nursing facility services, home health services, physician services, rural health services, federally qualified health center services, laboratory and x-ray services, family planning services, nurse midwife services, certified pediatric and family nurse practitioner services, freestanding birth center services, transportation to medical care and tobacco cessation for pregnant women. Mental health and substance use disorder treatment services must also be provided in compliance with the Mental Health Parity Act. Services provided by AHCCCS outside of these mandatory benefits are considered optional.

What benefits are optional under federal law?

Federal law also allows states to expand their benefit package to include a number of optional benefits including, but not limited to, home and community-based services, podiatry, dental services for adults, optometry services, eyeglasses, hospice and prescription drug coverage. Arizona has elected to include a number of these services in its benefit package because they provide a cost-savings to the state. For example, Arizona has elected to cover home and community-based services for eligible individuals enrolled in the Arizona Long-Term Care Program (ALTCS) because it is much more cost-effective than care in a nursing home and improves the quality of life for the member.

Are there differences between services that must be provided for children and those that must be provided to adults?

Yes. Under the requirements for EPSDT, children under age 21 are federally entitled to a much wider benefit package than adults. This expanded benefit package includes such services as chiropractic coverage, dental care and vision screenings. These services are required for the child population, but are optional benefits for adults.

Can AHCCCS change the benefit package to remove some optional benefits without legislative authority?

No. AHCCCS benefits are outlined in A.R.S. 36-2907. For this reason, a modification to the AHCCCS benefit package would require legislative and ultimately federal approval.