

Highlights from the “National Family Caregivers Month: Exploring the caregiver experience and impact” webcast

November 2024 webcast

On Friday, November 1, we hosted a webcast featuring Patrice Heinz, COO of the National Alliance for Caregiving; Maria Mann, a professional caregiver for UnitedHealthcare National Advisory Board member Jennifer Kucera; and Simone Mitchell, mother and family caregiver for National Advisory Board member Edward Mitchell. The speakers shared valuable insights on the essential role of caregivers and discussed ways Medicaid can be improved to better support their needs.

Impact of caregivers

In 2023, over 65 million people in the U.S. served as caregivers, many from lower-income households. The unpaid care provided by caregivers is estimated to be worth \$600 billion nationally. Caregivers help Medicaid enrollees prevent or delay hospital stays. However, unpaid care can come at a cost to caregivers, with many experiencing physical, mental and financial strains. One in four caregivers report poor physical health and are more likely to experience depression, anxiety or other mental health challenges.



Want to learn more? Be sure to watch the [full webcast](#).

Key takeaways

Could you share a personal story or experience that illustrates the impact caregivers have on the lives of those they support?

Patrice Heinz: *“I would characterize it as being an advocate for them. Throughout Ashley’s life, particularly when she was younger, the biggest impact I had was on being an advocate for her in the school system and the health care system. As she has gotten older, the biggest impact I think I can have on her is to teach her self-advocacy. Another significant impact has been to recognize that she has abilities beyond her disabilities. And that these abilities should be understood and appreciated and respected by providers.”*

In what ways could Medicaid be enhanced to provide better support for caregivers?

Simone Mitchell: *“Are the caregiver support services real and are they getting to people? Sometimes you try to use transportation services, but you’re either too rural to get to or they don’t have anyone to drive. A change that Medicaid policy could make would be around more support for family caregivers because they’re taking it all on.”*

What’s the most rewarding part of being a caregiver for you?

Maria Mann: *“It’s the fact that I see the impact that I have on someone. I enjoy smiles and conversations. I enjoy using my strength to help others. I’m just glad that me showing up helps people to want to do better in their day. Caregiving is an awesome thing.”*

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