



Liz Works to Provide Access to the Health Care You Need to Live Well

Hi, I'm Liz Schenkel and I'm the Medicaid storyteller at Community HealthCare Association of the Dakotas, or CHAD. Far before I was able to go to college and start working here, I was an almost Medicaid kid. My lived experience helped me understand the challenges people face when it comes to getting access to the health care and resources they need to live well, which is what prompted me to become a social worker interested in making big system changes to eliminate barriers for people.



Liz

Like a lot of people in South Dakota, I grew up in a hard working, loving family. My dad, with enough overtime, brought home a paycheck that took care of our basic needs, and even paid the premium for a family health plan through his employer, but nothing was left over to pay out-of-pocket costs if we did need care, so we often went without. My mom was our caretaker, then cared for my aging great-grandparents to save money on child and respite care. Year after year, they stayed just above the threshold to qualify for things like Medicaid or CHIP, so we scraped by without any help.

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As a result, I became a young adult with a mountain of health conditions to treat before I could be successful in work or school. I had chronic migraine, a turning eye that needed surgery, incredibly painful bilateral hip labrum tears that required PT, advanced imaging, and several surgeries to correct, and unmanaged asthma and allergies. It took years of doctoring and loads of debt to get healthy, and that debt held me back from going to college until I was 23 and my non-traditional student status led to fewer financial and social opportunities when I was in school. Had Medicaid expansion been around in the early 2000s, or had my dad simply known to work a little less overtime, my story and my siblings' stories would likely be much different than they are.

Getting health care shouldn't have to be that hard—and it shouldn't cause roadblocks to success and opportunity. That's why Medicaid matters to me. My story is familiar to lots of people in South Dakota, but it doesn't mean things have to stay this way.

We've got a lot of work to do to help make Medicaid more accessible and protect it for years to come. I think stories are an important part of building the power to do just that. That's why, at CHAD, we collect stories about Medicaid and how it impacts individuals, families, and communities. Everyone's story matters, and it might just be your story that resonates with community members, voters, and lawmakers who can help us preserve Medicaid and make it better. If you've got a story to share, I can't wait to connect with you. Feel free to contact me via phone or email or simply fill out our story collection form online.



Through storytelling we reduce stigma and build connections.

SHARE YOUR STORY AT bit.ly/medicaid-stories

