

Hepatitis C: State of Medicaid Access Report Card

Arkansas

Estimated Number of Individuals Living with Hepatitis C: 21,800¹



Grade	Summary
F	<p>Liver Damage (Fibrosis) Restrictions: Arkansas requires severe liver damage (F3 or greater), depending on a patient’s genotype and whether the individual is treatment naïve or experienced.</p> <p>Sobriety Restrictions: Arkansas requires abstinence from drugs and alcohol for at least six months.</p> <p>Prescriber Restrictions: Arkansas requires a specialist, or a provider working under direct supervision of a specialist, to prescribe.</p> <p>Recommendations to Improve Patient Access:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove liver damage, sobriety and prescriber requirements. Maintain transparency regarding hepatitis C coverage requirements. <p><i>Grade Rationale: Arkansas imposes severely restrictive liver damage and sobriety requirements to access hepatitis C medications. With these restrictions, very few people with hepatitis C have access to treatment.</i></p>

Background

As of May 2021, Arkansas had 917,474 individuals enrolled in Medicaid and Children’s Health Insurance (CHIP).² Arkansas Medicaid operates a Primary Care Case Management (PCCM) program in which the state contracts directly with primary care providers.³ The Medicaid program does not contract directly with any Managed Care Organizations (MCOs).⁴ However, in 2013, Arkansas opted to expand Medicaid with the General Assembly’s passage of the *Health Care Independence Act* for adults with incomes up to 138 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL).⁵ The state decided to use federal funding for those individuals to purchase private insurance through Arkansas’ Health Insurance Marketplace (HIM).⁶ Individuals eligible for the Health Care Independence program have the entirety of their premium paid by the program.⁷ In 2017, Health Care Independence was renamed Arkansas Works.⁸ The state program determines hepatitis C coverage criteria for all enrollees.

State of Medicaid Hepatitis C Treatment Access

Arkansas severely restricts access to hepatitis C medications. The state requires prior authorization (PA) and severe liver damage (F3 or greater) for patients to qualify for treatment.⁹ A beneficiary must be abstinent from alcohol or substance use for at least six months.¹⁰ If a patient is currently using substances, the PA form inquires if the individual is currently enrolled in a rehabilitation program.¹¹ It is unclear if enrollment in a substance use program is a requirement to receive PA. The PA form also inquires if the patient is co-infected with HIV but does not impose any restrictions related to the individual’s status.¹² A course of therapy is limited to 12 to 16 weeks depending on the regimen prescribed. It is unclear if there are quantity limits or if PA can be extended to continue therapy if needed.¹³ The Preferred Drug List (PDL) includes the following preferred Direct-Acting Antiviral (DAA) regimens: Mavyret, sofosbuvir/velpatasvir, Zepatier and non-preferred: Epclusa, Harvoni, Sovaldi, Viekira Pak, Vosevi.¹⁴ Arkansas also requires a specialist or a physician working directly under the supervision of a hepatologist, gastroenterologist or infectious disease specialist to prescribe. A previous version of Arkansas’ PA form (version: January 23, 2015) indicates the state’s conservative approach to treatment. The PA states that the Medicaid program is “monitoring the evolving therapeutic options for hepatitis C. Given the regular reporting of new results of several novel agents alone and in combination, the absence of long term clinical outcomes data, and the imminent approval of additional medications, Arkansas Medicaid has adopted a conservative approach to HCV therapy ... to be revised as new information becomes available. Many factors will be reviewed and prescribers may be asked to provide the medical necessity of urgency for treatment.”¹⁵

Liver Damage (Fibrosis) Restrictions

Arkansas Medicaid requires severe liver damage (F3 or greater) depending on a patient’s genotype and whether the individual is treatment naïve or experienced to access hepatitis C medication.¹⁶

Sobriety Restrictions

Arkansas Medicaid requires abstinence from drugs and alcohol for at least six months.¹⁷ Additionally, if a beneficiary is a current substance user, the PA form inquires if the individual is enrolled in a rehabilitation program.¹⁸ The PA also states that the beneficiary's substance use history will be review prior to approval.¹⁹

Prescriber Restrictions

The state requires a prescription to be written by a specialist: hepatologist, gastroenterologist, infectious disease or a prescriber working under the direct supervision of one of those specialty physicians.²⁰

Points of Contact for Questions & Concerns about Arkansas' State of Medicaid Hepatitis C Access

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¹ HepVu, Arkansas State Profile: <https://hepvu.org/local-data/arkansas/>

² Medicaid & CHIP in Arkansas, Medicaid.gov (Accessed November 2021): <https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/by-state/stateprofile.html?state=arkansas>

³ Fact Sheet: Medicaid Managed Care Model Variations and Arkansas Applications, Ark. Ctr. for Health Improvement (September 2015): <http://www.achi.net/Docs/332>

⁴ Share of Medicaid Population Covered Under Different Delivery Systems, State Health Facts, The Henry J Kaiser Family Foundation (Updated 7/1/2021): <http://kff.org/medicaid/state-indicator/share-of-medicaid-population-covered-under-different-delivery-systems/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D>

⁵ Arkansas Health Care Independence Act "Private Option", Arkansas Center for Health Improvement (ACHI) (Accessed November 2021): <http://www.achi.net/Pages/OurWork/Project.aspx?ID=58>

⁶ Ibid. Arkansas Health Care Independence Act "Private Option", ACHI (Accessed November 2021)

⁷ Ibid. Arkansas Health Care Independence Act "Private Option", ACHI (Accessed November 2021)

⁸ Arkansas Works, ARMedicaid (Accessed November 2021): <https://humanservices.arkansas.gov/divisions-shared-services/medical-services/healthcare-programs/arkansas-works/>

⁹ Arkansas Medicaid Prescription Drug Program, Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) Medication Therapy Request Sheet (Version: 03/09/2020): <https://arkansas.magellanrx.com/provider/docs/rxinfo/HepCTreatmntForm.pdf>

¹⁰ Ibid. Arkansas Medicaid Prescription Drug Program, Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) Medication Therapy Request Sheet

¹¹ Ibid. Arkansas Medicaid Prescription Drug Program, Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) Medication Therapy Request Sheet

¹² Ibid. Arkansas Medicaid Prescription Drug Program, Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) Medication Therapy Request Sheet

¹³ Ibid. Arkansas Medicaid Prescription Drug Program, Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) Medication Therapy Request Sheet

¹⁴ Prescription Drug Program Prior Authorization Criteria, Arkansas Medicaid (Revised 04/01/2021): <https://arkansas.magellanrx.com/provider/docs/rxinfo/PACriteria.pdf>

¹⁵ Previous Prior Authorization Not Available On-line. Arkansas Medicaid Prescription Drug Program, Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) Medication Therapy Request Sheet (Version: 01/23/2015)

¹⁶ Ibid. Arkansas Medicaid Prescription Drug Program, Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) Medication Therapy Request Sheet

¹⁷ Ibid. Arkansas Medicaid Prescription Drug Program, Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) Medication Therapy Request Sheet

¹⁸ Ibid. Arkansas Medicaid Prescription Drug Program, Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) Medication Therapy Request Sheet

¹⁹ Ibid. Arkansas Medicaid Prescription Drug Program, Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) Medication Therapy Request Sheet

²⁰ Ibid. Arkansas Medicaid Prescription Drug Program, Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) Medication Therapy Request Sheet

²¹ Arkansas Department of Human Services Contacts, ARMedicaid (Accessed November 2021): <https://humanservices.arkansas.gov/about-dhs/meet-the-secretary/>

²² Ibid. Arkansas Department of Human Services Contacts, ARMedicaid