



DATA SHORTS

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Demographics of Consumers Served In the Public Mental Health System (PMHS) Compared with All Medical Assistance (MA) Recipients

Many changes in Medical Assistance (MA) eligibility occurred on January 1, 2014. Under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), MA expansion extended coverage of inpatient and hospital based services to those who had eligibility through the Primary Care for Adults (PAC) program. Previous rules limiting MA adult eligibility to individuals who have children or those with a disability have been removed, and new income limits are in place (limits have risen from 113% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) to about 139% of the FPL). Eligibility for children has also expanded, going from a maximum of 200% of FPL to 211% of FPL. Consequently, it seemed an appropriate time to review the characteristics of adult and child consumers in the Public Mental Health System (PMHS) for Fiscal Year 2013, prior to when the ACA changes took effect. This Data Short compares PMHS consumers with all MA only eligible individuals. Services to people 65 and over are largely funded through Medicare and therefore very few appear in both groups.

The first two graphs compare adults served in the PMHS with adults eligible for MA in FY 2013; the second set compares data for children and adolescents. The first graph shows that, among PMHS adults, there is a greater percentage in the 46-64 age group and a smaller percentage in the 18-25 group when compared with the MA eligible population. The second graph shows that females constitute the majority for both groups and that, in the PMHS, the percentage of African Americans is nearly equal in the two groups, while the percentage of white consumers is higher in the PMHS.

In the third graph, the age distributions of children and adolescents are compared. The largest percentage of the MA eligible population is in the 0 to 5 category; this is in part due to children of eligible parents becoming eligible at birth. A smaller percentage appears in this age group in the PMHS because mental health issues tend to appear or to be identified after age 5. The final graph shows that there is a nearly even division of males and females among the MA eligible population, and that there is a higher percentage of males served in the PMHS. Among youth, the PMHS serves a higher percentage of African Americans than in the overall MA population, while the percentage of white youth is nearly the same.

Among adults served in the PMHS, the percentages of those who are female, age 46-64, and white are currently higher than in the MA eligible population. Among children and adolescents, the percentages of those who are male, age 6-13, and African American currently exceed those seen in the MA eligible population. It is anticipated that the change in adult MA eligibility requirements under the ACA may have an impact on the adult distributions; however, since the only eligibility changes for children and adolescents involved expanding the upper income limits, these distributions are less likely to be affected.

