

The Impact of Access to Substance Abuse Treatment on Disability

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Key Findings and Policy Implications

This paper examines the relationships between Medicaid expansion, access to substance abuse treatment, and DI enrollment. The study uses 2005-2017 data from the National Directory of Substance Abuse Treatment Facilities, linked to county-level DI beneficiary data from the Social Security Administration, and demographic data from the American Community Survey. The paper finds that:

- Medicaid expansions did not have a significant impact on the number of treatment facilities accepting Medicaid as a form of payment; nor did access to substance abuse treatment have a significant impact on DI enrollment.
- In states that expanded Medicaid eligibility, however, the number of treatment facilities declines disproportionately in counties that had a higher concentration of treatment facilities, compared to counties that had fewer facilities.

Substance use disorder is more prevalent among people with disabilities, making the study of substance abuse treatment highly relevant to the DI population. The importance of this project is in better understanding how Medicaid expansions affect people's access to substance abuse treatment and, in turn, DI participation.

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