



EBCI TRIBAL OPTION

For Providers



June 2026 Provider Newsletter

What is the EBCI Tribal Option?

EBCI Tribal Option assists approximately 5,500 Tribal-eligible Medicaid beneficiaries, primarily in Cherokee, Haywood, Swain, Jackson, and Graham counties.

[Learn More](#)

Meet The TRIBAL OPTION *Team*

Jimmy Burns Director of Managed Care

James "Jimmy" Burns, a member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and a direct descendant of Chief Nimrod Jarrett Smith, has dedicated more than 13 years to serving at the Cherokee Indian Hospital Authority. Jimmy graduated from Clemson with a degree in Accounting, which lead him to landing a job at CIHA in the finance division.

As CIHA took steps to launch EBCI Tribal Option as the first Indian Managed Care Entity in the country, Jimmy signed on as the Provider Network Manager to help oversee the build out of the Provider Network. His financial expertise paired with his intimate knowledge and experience of building Tribal Option from inception, positioned him perfectly to step in as the Director of Managed Care. Throughout his time at CIHA, his work has remained centered on strengthening access to culturally congruent care for all members across Western North Carolina. His commitment to serving others reflects one of our guiding principles, U Wa Shv Da Nv Te Lv — "the one who gives from their heart." Jimmy and his wife live in Jackson County with their two children.



EBCI TRIBAL OPTION





CHEROKEE INDIAN
HOSPITAL AUTHORITY

ENRICHMENT CENTER PROJECT UPDATES

The IDD/Enrichment Center Project represents a significant and forward-looking investment in the health, independence, and quality of life for members of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. It is designed to address long-standing gaps in services, including limited access to care, long wait times, lack of residential options, and insufficient day programming and support systems.

At its core, the project is about building a tribally driven system of care—one that reflects the values, culture, and unique needs of the community. This includes developing infrastructure, workforce capacity, and partnerships to ensure services are not only available, but sustainable and culturally appropriate.

The work includes building tribal infrastructure for an IDD/Autism program, creating a family resource center, improving access to assessments and supports, expanding meaningful day and residential options, and developing a strong tribal workforce to help manage and sustain these services.

**EBCI TRIBAL OPTION WILL BE PROVIDING MONTHLY PROJECT UPDATES
TO OUR PROVIDER NETWORK.**

CLICK HERE FOR ADDITIONAL PROJECT
UPDATES AND INFORMATION



Connecting Communities and Medicaid,

In accordance with federal requirements, NC Medicaid will host its annual virtual forum on the 1115 Waiver. The forum will provide updates on the implementation of the 1115 Waiver and include an opportunity for participants to ask questions.

In December 2024, North Carolina received federal approval to renew its Section 1115 Medicaid demonstration waiver for another five-year period. The waiver aims to improve health and well-being for all North Carolinians through a whole-person, well-coordinated

system of care that addresses both medical and non-medical drivers of health and advance health access.

Join us **Wednesday, June 24 at 1 p.m.**, for a virtual forum for NC Medicaid’s 1115 waiver. The Forum will provide updates on the 1115 Waiver and there will be an opportunity for questions and answers.

Please register if you are interested in attending and would benefit from learning more about the Medicaid waiver updates and initiatives.

NC Medicaid 1115 Waiver Forum

Wednesday, 1- 2 p.m., June 24, 2026

[Click here to register](#)

Closed captioning is available. For more information, email Medicaid.NCEngagement@dhhs.nc.gov.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) released an Interim Final Rule with Comment (IFC) requiring that certain adult Medicaid applicants and enrollees must, as a condition of Medicaid eligibility, meet an 80 hours per month work requirement, through employment, education, work programs, or community service. The rule establishes a nationwide operational framework designed to promote economic stability, self-sufficiency, and independence.

“The Working Families Tax Cut legislation made historic changes to the Medicaid program, and CMS is working closely with states to put those changes into action,” said CMS Administrator Dr. Mehmet Oz. “This rule helps Americans build skills and independence through work, education, job training, or community service, creating new opportunities for themselves and their families.”

Issued under Public Law 119-21, which CMS refers to as the [Working Families Tax Cut](#) (WFTC) legislation, the rule establishes the standards states must use to implement the statutory work requirement, including clear expectations for eligibility determinations,

exemptions, verification, and state reporting requirements. It reflects extensive coordination with states and builds on CMS' ongoing work to modernize eligibility systems and improve beneficiary interactions with states, while improving accountability.

A new [study](#) from the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation finds the new requirements could reduce poverty by as much as 2.9 million people depending on a variety of conditions such as employment availability.

This rule defines which adults ages 19 through 64 will be required to demonstrate work requirement activities. The rule also defines which individuals are not subject to the requirement because of health-related needs and other qualifying circumstances. These exemptions include, but are not limited to, individuals who are pregnant, postpartum, disabled, medically frail, American Indian or Alaska Native, parents or caregivers of young children and people with disabilities, and those who are already complying with similar requirements through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.

The rule also includes state data reporting requirements and establishes requirements for how states must assess and verify compliance and communicate the new requirement to Medicaid applicants and beneficiaries. These provisions are expected to promote transparency, reduce administrative burden, and ensure states provide clear, actionable guidance to new applicants and Medicaid beneficiaries on how to meet the new eligibility requirement.

CMS is supporting states as they implement the requirement through a combination of federal resources, technical assistance, and private-sector collaboration. This includes \$200 million in Government Efficiency Grants authorized under the WFTC legislation to support state system modernization and administrative capacity, as well as more than \$600 million in committed support from private-sector technology vendors to help states update eligibility and enrollment systems, and support for outreach to Medicaid beneficiaries. These investments build on CMS' broader modernization efforts, including expanding the use of automation, data integration, and real-time verification to improve efficiency, strengthen oversight, and enhance the beneficiary experience.

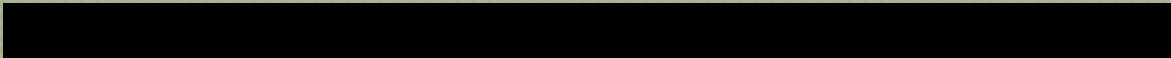
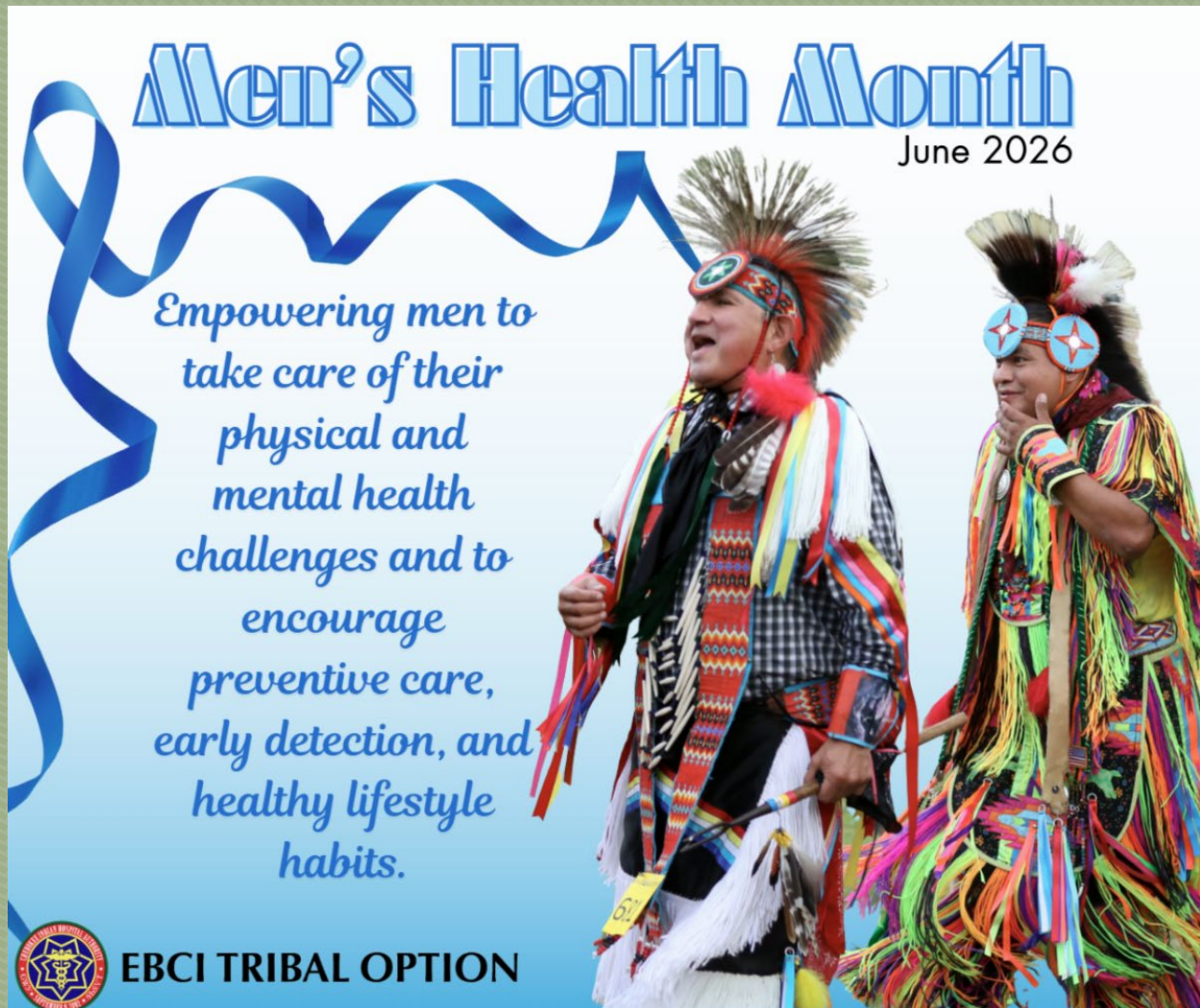
The work requirement must be implemented no later than January 1, 2027, in applicable states, although some states—such as Nebraska—has already implemented, and other states are considering early implementation.

This rule is being issued as an IFC with comment period to remain consistent with the legislative directive and implementation timeline established by the WFTC legislation. This approach helps to ensure timely implementation while allowing CMS to continue to collect and consider public feedback.

For a fact sheet on the Medicaid Community Engagement Requirement Interim Final Rule with Comment (CMS-2454-IFC), visit: <https://www.cms.gov/newsroom/fact->

[sheets/medicaid-community-engagement-requirement-certain-individuals-interim-final-rule-comment-period-cms.](#)


To view the IFC on the Federal Register, visit: <https://www.federalregister.gov>.

Men's Health Month

June 2026

Empowering men to take care of their physical and mental health challenges and to encourage preventive care, early detection, and healthy lifestyle habits.



EBCI TRIBAL OPTION



Acronym

OF THE MONTH

CNA

CERTIFIED NURSING ASSISTANT



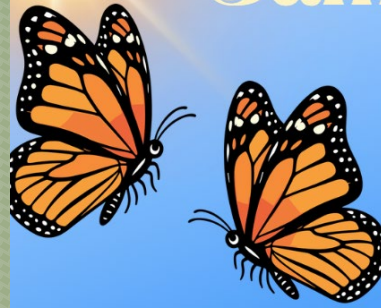
Cherokee

LANGUAGE

Summer

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Questions - Contact Live Help Desk

Submit questions to the Help Desk via email at openpayments@cms.hhs.gov or by calling 1-855-326-8366 (TTY Line: 1-844-649-2766), Monday through Friday, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (ET), excluding Federal holidays.

The Help Desk refers media inquiries to CMS' Press Office for response.

Visit the [Resources](#) page on the Open Payments website for many of the above resources.

Eat Well. Play Well. Stay Well.



EBCI TRIBAL OPTION



241 Cherokee Hospital Loop

Cherokee, NC 28719

MEMBER/PROVIDER: 800.260.9992

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