

Obstacles to Delivering Social Services in Michigan

Wednesdays
Class + Lab 3:30 to 6:30

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Course Description

The federal government funds many crucial health and human services for low-income households, such as Medicaid and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly the Food Stamp Program). However, individual states—which are rarely the focus of policy debates about these services—are usually responsible for overseeing the provision and administration of those services.

In Michigan, the State Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) is responsible for administering a broad range such programs, including Medicaid, public health programs, food assistance, cash assistance, and child welfare (foster care). The agency employs 14,000 staff and its budget of \$26 billion is nearly half of the state's total budget. More than two million state residents access the Department's services and programs each year. Myriad challenges emerge with the delivery of such a complicated set of programs, such as (1) communicating effectively with beneficiaries and ensuring both that those who are eligible for benefits get them, and those who are not, do not; (2) making dozens of disparate programs with numerous funding streams work well together; and (3) assuring that the programs actually help in the ways intended.

This course will focus on emerging challenges to the delivery of health and human services in Michigan, including for Medicaid, food assistance (SNAP and WIC), and cash assistance. Multidisciplinary groups of students will devise potential solutions to problems associated with the delivery of state benefits for vulnerable populations—especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Students will be split into five teams and assigned a particular policy topic. After the first three introductory class sessions, the class will proceed in two parts. In the first part, the teams will explore their assigned policy domain to get a more refined sense of challenges and possible solutions that warrant further research and elaboration. Each team will draft an 8 to 10 page memo with their findings and present those findings to the group in week six or seven. In the second part of the class, each team will dig into particular policy solutions with an eye to presenting them to policymakers who may be in a position to implement them. The final work product will be a 20 to 30 page policy memo, along with a 15 to 20 minute presentation to stakeholders.

In this course, as in all the problem solving initiative courses, students are the leaders in advancing the course objectives. Course instructors will be team leaders rather than traditional professors delivering pre-established content. In light of all this, your vigorous participation this coming semester will be influential in shaping the particular outcomes of our course.

Course Objectives

By the completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Articulate the role of their discipline in addressing the topic of the course.
2. Define and understand the identified problem.
3. Describe methods to communicate across disciplines and with key stakeholders to discuss this problem.
4. Develop the skills to work collaboratively to create innovative professional perspectives and practices that assist with solving the problem.
5. Reflect on the systemic factors that perpetuate and make it difficult to solve the problem.

Participation and Attendance

Class participation is an essential part of the course, as we will spend time in class applying the concepts and research ideas you have gathered. Class attendance and participation is mandatory. If you cannot make a class, please email us in advance. Office hours are by appointment.

This course requires significant participation and preparation. In any course in which group work is an integral component of the course, students may have concerns about workload distribution within the group. We are hopeful in light of the real world applications of our work, that “free riders” will not be an issue. However, peer assessment will be part of the evaluation of the course, as you will see below.

Assignments

The centerpiece of the class will be a final project that showcases the work that you and your team have done to solve a problem in your topic area, together with a presentation. In addition:

Response Paper/Discussion Leader. Each of you must [sign up](#) for one class over the course of the term. For that class, you will (1) prepare an 800 to 1,000 word response to the reading and (2) develop three questions to help guide a conversation with the broader group. Your response is due the evening before the class; the assignment is open-ended. You might explain why you (dis)agree with the author of an article, draw connections between readings, or highlight important but unanswered questions. We will then ask you, as well as the other student(s) who have signed up on that day, to lead class discussion.

Reflections on Group Dynamics. On October 13 and November 10, we’d like you to turn in brief, informal reflections – two or three paragraphs, perhaps – on interpersonal dynamics within your

topic group. You might use these papers to praise your classmates for their diligence, to spot potential challenges, to discuss ongoing problems, or to consider techniques to overcoming difficulties.

Detailed Outline / Draft. On November 9, we will ask your group to turn in a detailed outline and/or draft of your project. This outline/draft does not need to be, and indeed almost certainly won't be, close to a final product. But it should also not be a vague sketch: by this point in the semester, your group should have a clear direction and a strong sense of what the final paper will look like. We'll review what you've done at that point and offer feedback.

Zoom Logistics

Joining the Class Meeting. You can find the Zoom link on the Canvas site for the course by clicking on "Zoom" in the menu on the left side of the screen. Please connect to the Zoom meeting a couple of minutes early so that you have time to address any technical issues that may arise and so that we can start class on time.

Video. Zoom will ask for permission to access the video camera on your device. Please grant permission and then leave your video camera on during our class sessions. Keeping your video on helps to build community and encourages engagement; you should think of this much like attending class in person. You are welcome to use a virtual background if you prefer, so long as the image you choose is not distracting. You may turn off your video if you need to, but please do so for as short a time as possible. If keeping your video on during class poses a problem for you for technical or other reasons, please tell us or reach out to the Office of Student Life (lawstudentlife@umich.edu, 734-764-0516).

Audio. Your microphone will be muted on entry. Please keep it muted unless we ask you to unmute.

Programming Your Name. Please make sure that your first and last name are fully spelled out in your display name. You can change it by hovering over your name and clicking "Rename."

Recordings. We will record every class and post it on Canvas. These recordings are for internal use only by students enrolled in the course to help manage technical problems and other challenges associated with the pandemic. Please do not publicly post or otherwise share our class recordings with anyone outside of class. Please respect the privacy of your fellow students and do not record classes yourself using Zoom or any other software.

Technical Help. If you are unfamiliar with Zoom or would like a refresher, please watch [this short video](#) about what happens when you join a Zoom meeting and then read [this tutorial](#) about how to use the Attendee Controls in a Zoom Meeting. If you have technical problems with Zoom, you should email the AV department at the law school at LawITStudentSupport@umich.edu.

Disability Accommodations

The University of Michigan is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services, and activities. Requests for accommodations by students with disabilities may be made by contacting the University's Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) Office by email at ssdoffice@umich.edu or by phone at 734-763-3000. Once your eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, SSD will contact Assistant Dean Lindsey Stetson at the Law School's Office of Student Life (lawstudentlife@umich.edu, 734-764-0516) with a recommendation, and she will work with you and SSD to finalize and facilitate your accommodations. For more information about this process, please feel welcome to contact Dean Stetson.

Mental Health Resources

The Law School has a designated counselor, Reena Sheth (rpssheth@umich.edu), who is available to students for outreach, consultation, and individual therapy. The University has additional resources available to meet students' needs. For urgent and crisis resources after business hours, call 734-765-8312. You can learn more about available counseling services and find information about how to schedule an appointment with a counselor on the law school's mental health resources website.

Policy Topics

Enrollment in Public Assistance and Addressing Racial Disparities

Because of complex processes that have evolved over multiple administrations, Michigan's public assistance programs can needlessly discourage participation and deny benefits to eligible families. Even when families do access benefits, they often spend far too much time and energy negotiating systems, tracking down paperwork, and deciphering letters. The goal of this project is to identify a set of programs that are particularly under-enrolled, to analyze why they are under-enrolled, and to recommend a set of evidence-based strategies to increase enrollment. How do we reach families effectively? Who should be targeted? What messages resonate the most when communicating with those who are eligible but not accessing benefits? In particular, this group should examine whether racial minorities are enrolled proportionally in public assistance programs -- and, if not, which interventions might successfully increase enrollment in communities of color?

The Role of Community Health Workers

Community health workers (CHWs) are frontline public health professionals who work with members of the local community to address various challenges around accessing health and social services. In recent years, the state of Michigan has required Medicaid Managed Care Plans to employ a certain ratio of CHWs, increasing the number of CHWs per population over time. But how exactly health plans and other community organizations can get the highest "return on investment" on CHWs' time remains uncertain. What should Michigan's approach be to using CHWs? Should they be allocated to specific communities based on social vulnerability? Should they be employed by the state? Health plans? Community based organizations? Are there specific tasks that CHWs should be doing as opposed to other individuals in the Medicaid program (e.g., care managers, primary care providers)? And how should Michigan think about sustainable funding a CHW program over the next several years?

Integrating Behavioral and Physical Health in Michigan

The state recently settled a lawsuit that was intended to "improve the delivery of behavioral health services and supports to eligible children with a mental or behavioral disorder. These children receive Medicaid and are identified now in several State systems, meaning the Behavioral Health Administration, Child Welfare, Department of Education and Medicaid Services Administration.

The agency has recently signed an interim agreement and has started creating a plan to meet the objectives/commitments in the interim agreement. These commitments would form specific focal point(s) for this assignment. There are many objectives, but a few that are the most relevant include:

- Research and design a model for assessing the behavioral health needs of children that would be effective across the multiple systems identified above.
- Research multiple managed care oversight models and outline strengths and weaknesses of each model. This would include strengthening what exists, researching specialty carve out models, Specialty Integrated plans and others
- Designing a communication plan (regardless of model chosen) that would effectively communicate with recipients, payers and providers about the model, including about the values driving this model, the performance data being used, and any timelines.
- Proving that our model is better than before, to meet the objectives of the lawsuit, and to enable its use as a tool to communicate with a variety of audiences--courts, plaintiffs, the legislature, actuaries, each administration, advocacy groups, clinicians, payers, parents, and communities.

This group will identify a discrete set of tasks that could contribute to the Department's work to improve the quality of care for children in accordance with the settlement.

Access to Vaccines

When and if a vaccine is approved for COVID-19, it is unlikely to be immediately available to anyone who might want it. How should the state prioritize access to the new vaccine? How could it use its authority over Medicaid to assure a fair distribution to those who need it? On the flip side of the coin, what should the state do about those who refuse to take a vaccine, thereby putting others at risk? Should the state mandate vaccination? Require vaccination for school-children or for others who seek access to state-supported programs or facilities? Should people be able to opt out for religious reasons, notwithstanding the risk of abuse? Is a purely voluntary approach preferable?

Unemployment Insurance

The vast majority of the financial support that the U.S. Congress has supplied to individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic has come through a radical -- yet mostly unheralded -- expansion of the unemployment insurance system. The expansion has placed an enormous strain on state unemployment agencies and has shone new light on the promises and pitfalls of relying on those agencies to provide cash assistance to people in need. What changes to Michigan's unemployment system ought to be prioritized in the coming months and years? How can the unemployment agency ease enrollment, especially for gig workers and for ethnic and racial minorities? How can the unemployment agency effectively prevent fraud -- which is widespread in Michigan -- without discouraging enrollment?

Speakers

To bolster your understanding of the policy environment, we have invited a roster of guest speakers who are prominent players in statewide policy and politics. Not every speaker will be directly relevant to your group's topic, but they will provide useful context and could spark ideas across groups.

9/23 - Lou Roubal, Chief Deputy Director for Opportunity for MDHHS, discussing the delivery of public assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic

9/30 - Sarah Esty, Senior Deputy Director of the Policy and Planning Administration at MDHHS, discussing the behavioral health system

10/7 - Luke Shaefer, Professor at the Ford School and the School of Social Work, Director of Poverty Solutions at the University of Michigan, discussing unemployment insurance, food stamps, and eviction during the COVID-19 pandemic

10/14 - Helen Levy, Research Professor at the Institute for Social Research and the Ford School, discussing Michigan's Medicaid expansion

10/21 - Kate Massey, Senior Deputy Director of Michigan's Medicaid program, discussing Medicaid during the COVID-19 pandemic

10/28 - Michael Brennan and Adam Selzer, CEO and COO of Civilla, respectively, discussing how design can change the way our public-serving institutions work

11/4 - Marianne Udow-Phillips, Founding Executive Director of the Center for Health Research Transformation, discussing the role of community health workers in Medicaid

11/11 - Jonathan Warsh, Chief of Staff to the Director of MDHHS and Deputy Medicaid Director, and Nicholas Bagley, Professor of Law and former Special Counsel to Governor Whitmer, on the state's role in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic

11/18 - Robert Gordon, Director of MDHHS, discussing leadership through crisis

Readings

9/2 -

Read Chapters 2 and 3 of *\$2.00 a Day* by Kathryn Edin and Luke Shaefer. We encourage you to purchase the book, which offers a timely look at poverty in the United States. But if that is a hardship, the chapters can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

9/9 -

Overcharged by David Hyman and Charlie Silver, pages 415-26.

Valuing Medicaid by Bill Gardner, Timothy Jost, and Harold Pollack.

9/16 -

Sustainable Social Policy by Theda Skocpol.

Spending on Government Anti-Poverty Efforts by Luke Shaefer et al.

Mississippi, Burned by Sarah Varney (available [here](#)).

9/23 - Delivering Public Assistance during COVID

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, "States Are Using Much-Needed Temporary Flexibility in SNAP to Respond to COVID-19 Challenges," March 31, 2020, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/states-are-using-much-needed-temporary-flexibility-in-snap-to-respond-to>.

Ron Lieber, "Are You Eligible for Food Stamps Now? Maybe, but It's Complex," New York Times, July 17, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/17/your-money/food-stamps-coronavirus.html>.

Katie Shantz, Heather Hahn, Mary Nelson, Matt Lyons, Ann Flagg, "Changes in State TANF Policies in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic," Urban Institute, August 4, 2020, <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/changes-state-tanf-policies-response-covid-19-pandemic>.

9/30 - Behavioral Health in Michigan

Michelle Herman Soper, Center for Health Care Strategies, "Integrating Behavioral Health into Medicaid Managed Care: Design and Implementation Lessons from State Innovators," Center for Health Care Strategies, April 2016, https://www.chcs.org/media/BH-Integration-Brief_041316.pdf.

Kim Tuck and Erin Smith, "Behavioral Health Coverage in Medicaid Managed Care," Institute for Medicaid Innovation, April 2019, https://www.medicaidinnovation.org/_images/content/2019-IMI-Behavioral_Health_in_Medicaid-Report.pdf.

Center for Health and Research Transformation, "Community Mental Health Landscape Analysis: A Report to the Flinn Foundation," August 2019, https://chrt.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/FlinnFdn_CMHLandscapeAnalysis-.pdf.

10/7 - Unemployment Insurance in Michigan

Packet of unemployment readings from Poverty Solutions (on Canvas)

10/14 - Michigan's Medicaid Expansion

Packet of Medicaid readings from Kaiser Family Foundation, John Ayanian, and Aaron Carroll

10/21 – Medicaid during COVID

Jessica Schubel, “States Are Leveraging Medicaid to Respond to COVID-19,” *Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*, September 2, 2020, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/health/states-are-leveraging-medicaid-to-respond-to-covid-19>.

Rebecca Landucci, Jennifer E. Moore, Clare Brown, Caroline Adams, Nicole Truhe, Mark Larson, “How States Are Facilitating Medicaid Enrollment During COVID-19 – And How They Can Do Even More,” June 17, 2020, <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hblog20200612.887360/full/>.

Robin Rudowitz, Rachel Garfield, Elizabeth Hinton, and Anthony Damico, “Understanding the Intersection of Medicaid, Work, and COVID-19,” June 12, 2020, <https://www.kff.org/report-section/understanding-the-intersection-of-medicaid-work-and-covid-19-issue-brief/>.

Heidi Allen and Benjamin Sommers, “Medicaid and COVID-19 At the Center of Both Health and Economic Crises,” June 11, 2020, *JAMA*. 2020;324(2):135-136.

10/28 – Delivering public benefits with design thinking

Civilla, “Project Re:form: One Application’s Journey (so far),” May 5, 2018, <https://medium.com/@Civilla/project-re-form-one-applications-journey-so-far-2e3a6e96e262>.

Code for America, “Bringing Social Safety Net Benefits Online: Examining online platforms for all 50 states,” August 2019, <https://www.codeforamerica.org/features/bringing-social-safety-net-benefits-online/>.

Zack Quaintance “A Blueprint for Human-Centered Change,” June 2018, Government Technology, <https://www.govtech.com/civic/A-Blueprint-for-Human-Centered-Change.html>.

Jess Kahn and Mollie Ruskin, “Redesigning the journey to critical benefits for Americans in poverty,” January 5, 2017, <https://medium.com/the-u-s-digital-service/redesigning-the-journey-to-critical-benefits-for-americans-in-poverty-2ca068591f32>.

Dustin Palmer, “The Missed Opportunity in Online Benefits Applications: Mobile First,” April 3, 2019, <https://www.codeforamerica.org/news/the-missed-opportunity-in-online-benefits-applications-mobile-first>.

11/4 – Community Health Workers

Adrienne Lapidis, Jeremy Lapidis, and Michele Heisler, “Realizing the Value of Community Health Workers – New Opportunities for Sustainable Financing,” New

England Journal of Medicine, May 23, 2019,
<https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp1815382>.

Carolina Nkouaga, Arthur Kaufman, Charlie Alfero, Claudia Medina, "Diffusion Of Community Health Workers Within Medicaid Managed Care: A Strategy To Address Social Determinants Of Health," *Health Affairs Blog*, July 25, 2017,
<https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hblog20170725.061194/full/>.

Green and Healthy Homes Initiative, "Using State Plan Amendments for Community Health Worker Medicaid Reimbursement," February 2019,
https://www.greenandhealthyhomes.org/wp-content/uploads/Community-Health-Worker-Medicaid-Reimbursement-State-Plan-Amendment_final.pdf.

Sarah Klein, Martha Hostetter, Roosa Tikkanen, and Douglas McCarthy, "How New Mexico's Community Health Workers Are Helping to Meet Patients' Needs," Commonwealth Fund, February 19, 2020,
<https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/case-study/2020/feb/new-mexico-community-health-workers>.

11/11 - Michigan's Response to COVID-19

TBD.