Housing affordability is a social determinant of health. A lack of affordable housing contributes to housing instability and homelessness, both of which are strong predictors of higher health care costs and poor health outcomes, among others. Many states—especially those with high housing costs and large numbers of low-income residents—face housing affordability challenges. Unaffordable Rents, a new measure on State Health Compare, provides six years (2012-2017) of data on the percentage of rental households that spend more than 30% of their monthly income on rent, both at the national and state level, including breakdowns for Medicaid enrollment, non-white/white, disability status, and household income.

Housing Affordability Matters
Unaffordable Rents: A New Measure on State Health Compare

34.3% of households in Florida rented in 2017.

Breakdown of Unaffordable Rents in Florida

- 53.8% of rental households in Florida had unaffordable rents in 2017.
- 65.3% of rental households with a Medicaid enrollee had unaffordable rents in 2017.
- 57.4% of rental households of color had unaffordable rents in 2017.
- 60.1% of rental households that have a disability had unaffordable rents in 2017.
- 86.2% of rental households with an income less than $25,000 had unaffordable rents in 2017.

Using Medicaid to Address Housing Instability at the State Level

States have the flexibility to use Medicaid funds to help provide housing support services for individuals with disabilities, older adults needing long-term services and supports, and individuals experiencing chronic homelessness. Medicaid can be used to provide services to support individuals’ housing transitions, to help individuals sustain their tenancy, and to develop strategic housing collaboratives. These services can be reimbursed through Medicaid demonstration waivers and Medicaid state plans. For example, in November 2016 Florida requested an amendment to their 1115 Managed Medical Assistance (MMA) Waiver to pilot a housing assistance program for individuals who are homeless or at risk for homelessness, with serious mental illnesses or substance use disorders. At the time of publication, the waiver was pending CMS approval.

The Measures that Matter Series

This infographic is the second in a series highlighting measures available from State Health Compare, a resource states can use to better understand trends in health and health care in their state and compare those to other states and the nation. The previous infographic in the series, Education Matters, highlighted the role education plays in inequities in health care affordability and access. Click here to check out these and other estimates on State Health Compare!