



IMMIGRATION

## ICE can use Medicaid data to find people without legal status for deportation cases

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HEARD ON MORNING EDITION

By Jasmine Garsd, Steve Inskeep

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Starting this week, ICE can use Medicaid data in deportation cases. A judge rejected a legal challenge against the practice brought by Democrat-led states last year.

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STEVE INSKEEP, HOST:

Starting Tuesday, the Trump administration may resume giving immigration authorities leads on where to find people without legal status. A federal judge says it is lawful to hand over information about who is getting public health benefits. NPR immigration correspondent Jasmine Garsd is covering this story. Jasmine, hi.

JASMINE GARSD, BYLINE: Hi.

INSKEEP: Why is this in court now?

GARSD: So as part of the administration's deportation campaign early last year, Homeland Security officials requested information from the Health and Human Services Department about undocumented immigrants who were enrolled in

Medicaid, and HHS gave it to them. In response, 20 Democratic attorneys generals sued the Trump administration - that was back in July. At the time, a federal judge temporarily barred the administration from sharing the information, but now he's ruled that it can resume doing so starting tomorrow.

INSKEEP: OK. So this is telling immigration authorities who's getting Medicaid. Can people without documents even sign up for Medicaid?

GARSD: Mostly, no. It's state by state. Many states don't have this at all, but some democratic states do allow undocumented immigrants to get state-funded health insurance benefits - for example, New York. New York has extended Medicaid benefits for all residents over 65 years old, regardless of immigration status.

INSKEEP: OK. So there may be some people without legal status who you might find this way. What would the government then do with this information as this ruling takes effect this week?

GARSD: What the judge ruled is that the Trump administration is only allowed to share some Medicaid data about people living unlawfully in the U.S. So it cannot access personal information from other immigrants receiving Medicaid or U.S. citizens. And he said that what can be shared is the following - citizenship, immigration status, address, phone number, date of birth and Medicaid ID. No health information, though.

INSKEEP: Ah, because that's supposed to be private.

GARSD: Right.

INSKEEP: How have states responded to this?

GARSD: Well, advocates are saying this is invasive, and, you know, there's a concern that this is going to deter people from getting basic health care. Public health advocates say it's important for everyone to have access to vaccines, to immunizations, to keep the entire population healthy. But, you know, for Republicans, this is a huge victory. It's seen as something that's long overdue. Republicans have been arguing for decades that undocumented immigrants are a burden on the American taxpayer, on local schools and medical systems. So this is seen as a major victory.

INSKEEP: OK. How does it play out then?

GARSD: OK. So the order goes into effect tomorrow. It's going to stay in place until the lawsuit is fully resolved. The judge is still considering what other kinds of information Health and Human Services can release to Homeland Security beyond this data. You know, can DHS request data about citizens or lawful permanent residents? What about with - families with mixed immigration status? So...

INSKEEP: Oh, yeah.

GARSD: We're definitely going to be hearing more about this.

INSKEEP: OK, we'll keep checking back for your reporting. Jasmine, thanks so much.

GARSD: Sure thing, Steve.

INSKEEP: That's NPR's Jasmine Garsd.

(SOUNDBITE OF MUSIC)

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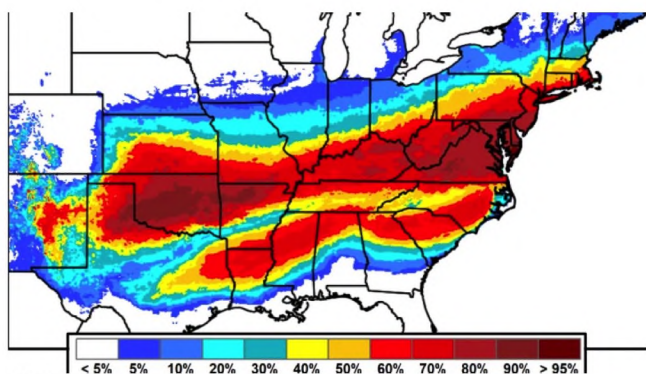
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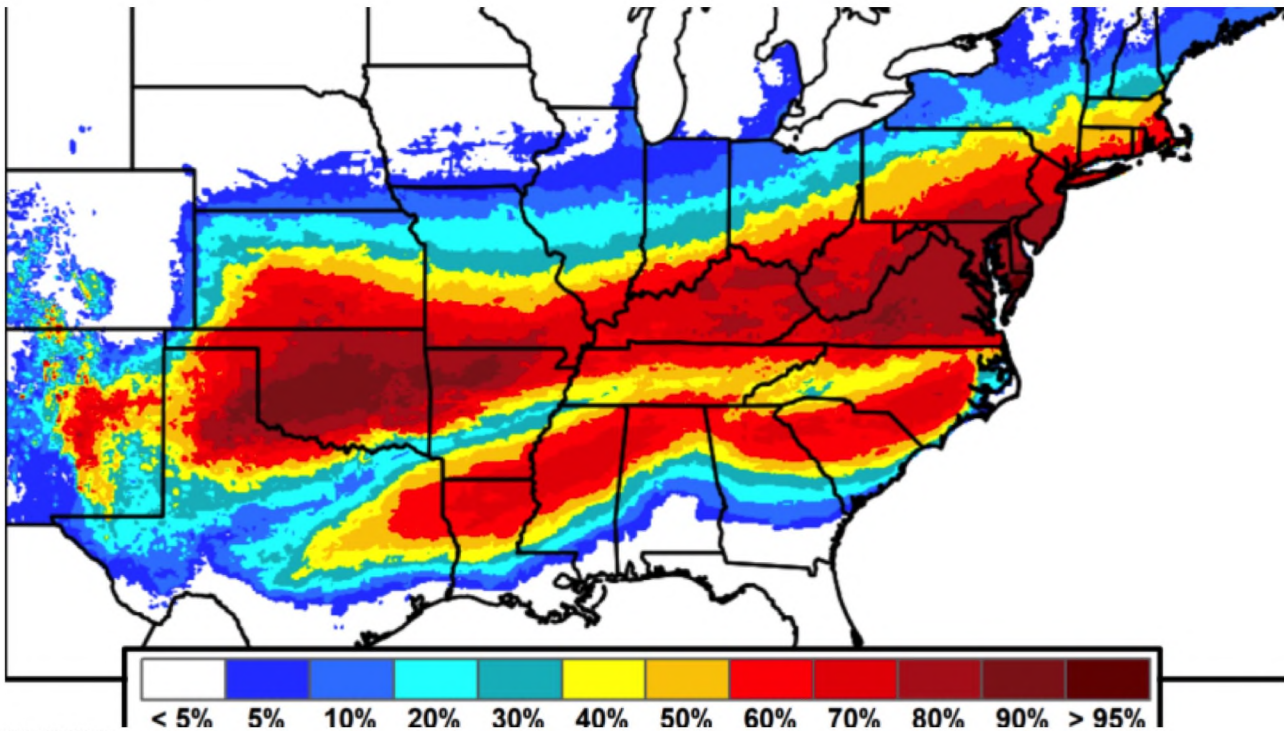
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